RECORDED VERSIONS GUITAR

AUTHENTIC TRANSCRIPTIONS WITH NOTES AND TABLATURE

THE Carter Family collection

32 SONGS FROM

The Royal Family of Country Music

Plus an Introduction, Rare Photos, Discography, and an Analysis of Their Technique and Music

by Fred Sokolow



HAL•LEONARD®

CORDED VERSIONS GUITAR
NTIC TRANSCRIPTIONS
OTES AND TABLATURE

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32 SONGS FROM The Royal Family of Country Music

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THE Carter Family collection

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RECORDING SESSIONS AND SONGS
(Chronological Listing)

Introduction
The Royal Family of Country Music

The original Carter Family, which consisted of A.P. Carter, his wife Sara, and sister-in-law Maybelle Carter, is the royal family of country music. Starting with the now-legendary Bristol sessions of 1927, their recordings, appearances, and radio broadcasts practically defined country music for decades. They wrote, arranged and collected rural Southern folk songs of love and family, old ballads, and gospel tunes. Many Carter Family versions of traditional songs like "Wabash Cannonball," "Can The Circle Be Unbroken," and "Worried Man Blues" have become standards, recorded by countless country, folk and bluegrass artists. Woody Guthrie created several of his songs by writing new lyrics to melodies the Carter Family had collected.

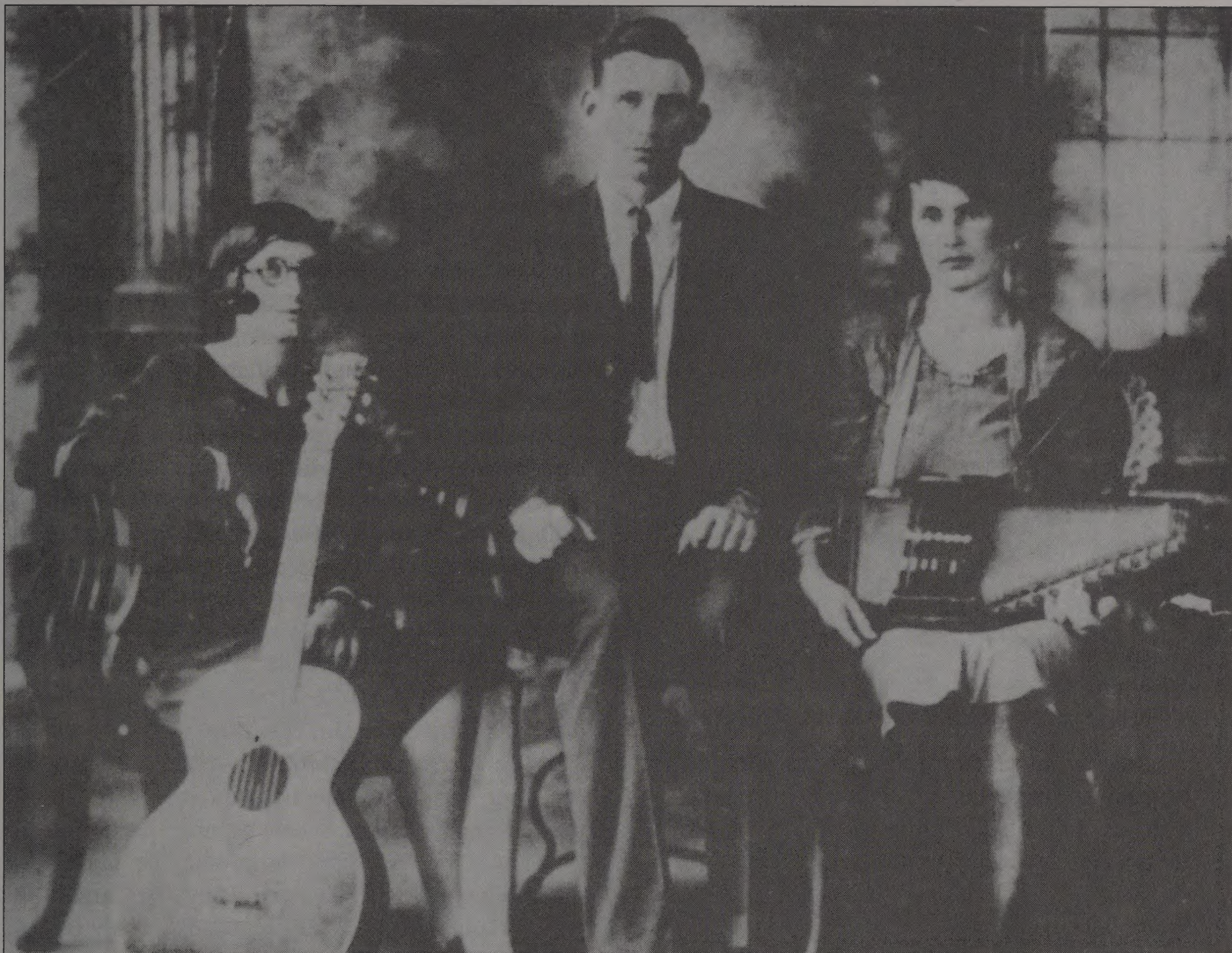


Maybelle's style of guitar playing was unique

Sara strummed autoharp or guitar and sang lead, A.P. "bassed in" (as he put it) to enhance the vocals, while Maybelle sang alto and held it all together, strumming and picking distinctive solos on her big Gibson L-5, the classiest and most expensive guitar you were likely to see in a Depression-era string band. Maybelle's soloing style rocked the guitar world of the South, setting a new standard for country guitarists; you were considered a good picker if you could play melody on the bass strings and keep brushing out a rhythm on treble strings like Maybelle. Guitar had always been a mainstay of a string band's rhythm section, but the Carter Family's hits were the first country records to consistently feature guitar as a soloing instrument.

Alvin Pleasant Delaney Carter was born December 18, 1891 in southwest Virginia's Scott County, in a beautiful part of the Appalachians near Clinch Mountain. His parents played and sang folk songs and religious songs, and the young A.P. occasionally performed at local medicine shows. He met Sara while he was selling fruit trees. Sara Dougherty, born July 21, 1898 in neighboring Wise County, was raised by her aunt and uncle; she and four siblings were scattered among kinfolk when her parents died. Her adopted family was musical, and when A.P. first spotted her, Sara was playing autoharp and singing "Engine 143" in her aunt's parlor; he came up behind her and started singing bass. She had a strong, clear low voice and knew hundreds of songs. They courted for a year and were married in 1915, the year Sara's six-year old cousin Maybelle was learning to play banjo, autoharp, and guitar.

Born May 10, 1909 in Scott County, Maybelle Addington learned music from her nine sisters and brothers. She was often present at informal musical gatherings at A.P. and Sarah's house in Maces Springs. By the time she was a teenager, she, A.P., and Sarah were performing occasionaly at local churches, lodges, and schoolhouses to supplement their farm-related income. In 1926, Maybelle married A.P.'s younger brother Ezra and settled nearby, and the trio began playing and performing together more often. Sara and Maybelle played and sang seated,

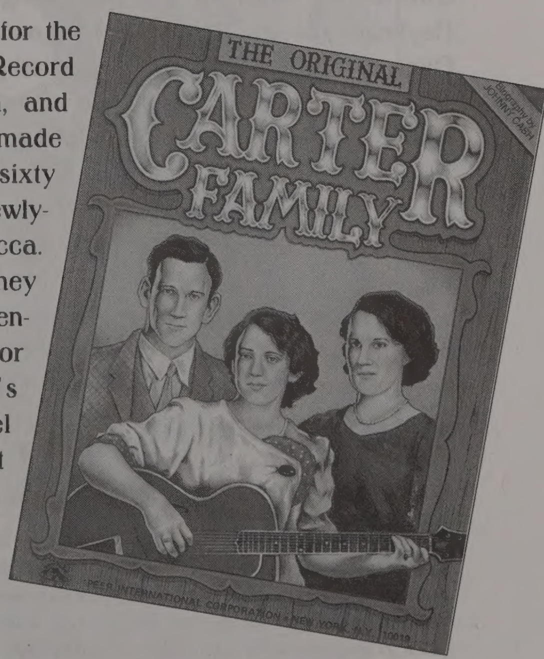


First Recording in August, 1927, in Bristol, Tennessee

and A.P. stood behind them singing bass. He briefly introduced the songs. The performances were very informal, and fliers A.P. posted to advertise their appearances noted that "The Program is Morally Good."

In 1927, the trio traveled twenty-five miles to Bristol, Tennessee, to participate in Victor's field recording of local "folk" talent, supervised by talent scout Ralph Peer. Both the Carter Family's and Jimmie Rodgers' careers were launched by this talent sweep. The Carters were asked back every six months to record more songs for Victor, and performing and recording gradually became their main activity. In the next seven years they recorded most of the tunes that made them famous.

The Carter Family continued to perform and make good-selling records for Victor despite A.P. and Sara's separation. Shortly before they left Victor, Peer became their manager. In 1935 they recorded forty songs for the American Record Corporation, and in 1936 made another sixty sides for newly-formed Decca. In 1940 they recorded twenty tunes for Columbia's OKeh label and the next year recorded thirteen more songs for RCA's Bluebird.





When the original Carter Group broke up, Maybelle formed a new group

Where did all the music come from? After exhausting their repertoire of songs they grew up with, A.P. began going on song-hunting expeditions. He traveled around Virginia, often accompanied by his African-American singer/guitarist friend, Lesley Riddle, who had the knack for memorizing melodies and later teaching them to Maybelle and Sara. Riddle contributed many of his own songs and gave Maybelle pointers on fingerpicking and slide guitar. Often, they found words in old printed pamphlets or songbooks and wrote their own melodies, or completed song fragments taught them by Virginia folk. As the Carters' fame grew, people often sent them poems and songs, anxious to hear a friend or relative's lyric or tune appear on a Carter Family recording.

In 1938, when the trio moved to Texas and became very active on "border" radio*, their children began joining the act. Maybelle started playing solos on autoharp as well as guitar, holding the instrument upright on her shoulder. In 1942, the Carters moved to Charlotte, North Carolina for more radio work.

* Radio stations located just across the border, in Mexico, were not subject to U.S. broadcasting rules. One result was that their broadcasts were more powerful and garnered a wider audience than U.S. stations. June Carter said if you hung a tin can on a fence in Texas you'd pick up the Carter Family. They could often be heard as fas as the West Coast.

The next year, A. P. and Sara left the group, tired of traveling, but Maybelle carried on with her daughters June, Anita and Helen. "The Carter Sisters and Mother Maybelle" performed live and on radio, and in 1950 they moved to Nashville to join the Grand Ole Opry, bringing with them their new, young guitarist, Chet Atkins.

A.P. and Sara retired from music, but they performed occasionally with their children and recorded over eighty songs with them before A.P. died in 1960. Maybelle and the Carter Sisters enjoyed a new popularity with Northern audiences during the '60s folk revival. Maybelle continued to perform with her daughters and solo into the '70s, working tirelessly to promote the old-fashioned country style for which the Carters were already legend. She helped the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band create the historic "Will The Circle Be Unbroken" sessions in 1971. When her daughter June married Johnny Cash, Maybelle and the Carter Sisters became regulars on Cash's weekly television show and live performances. Maybelle taught her granddaughter Carlene Carter, a country music star of the '90s, to play guitar. Maybelle died on October 23, 1978, and Sara passed away a few months later.

In 1970, the original Carter Family trio was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Meanwhile, back at Maces Springs, A.P. and Sara's children turned the family's general store into a thousand-seat theatre where yearly memorial concerts were held to honor the Carter Family.

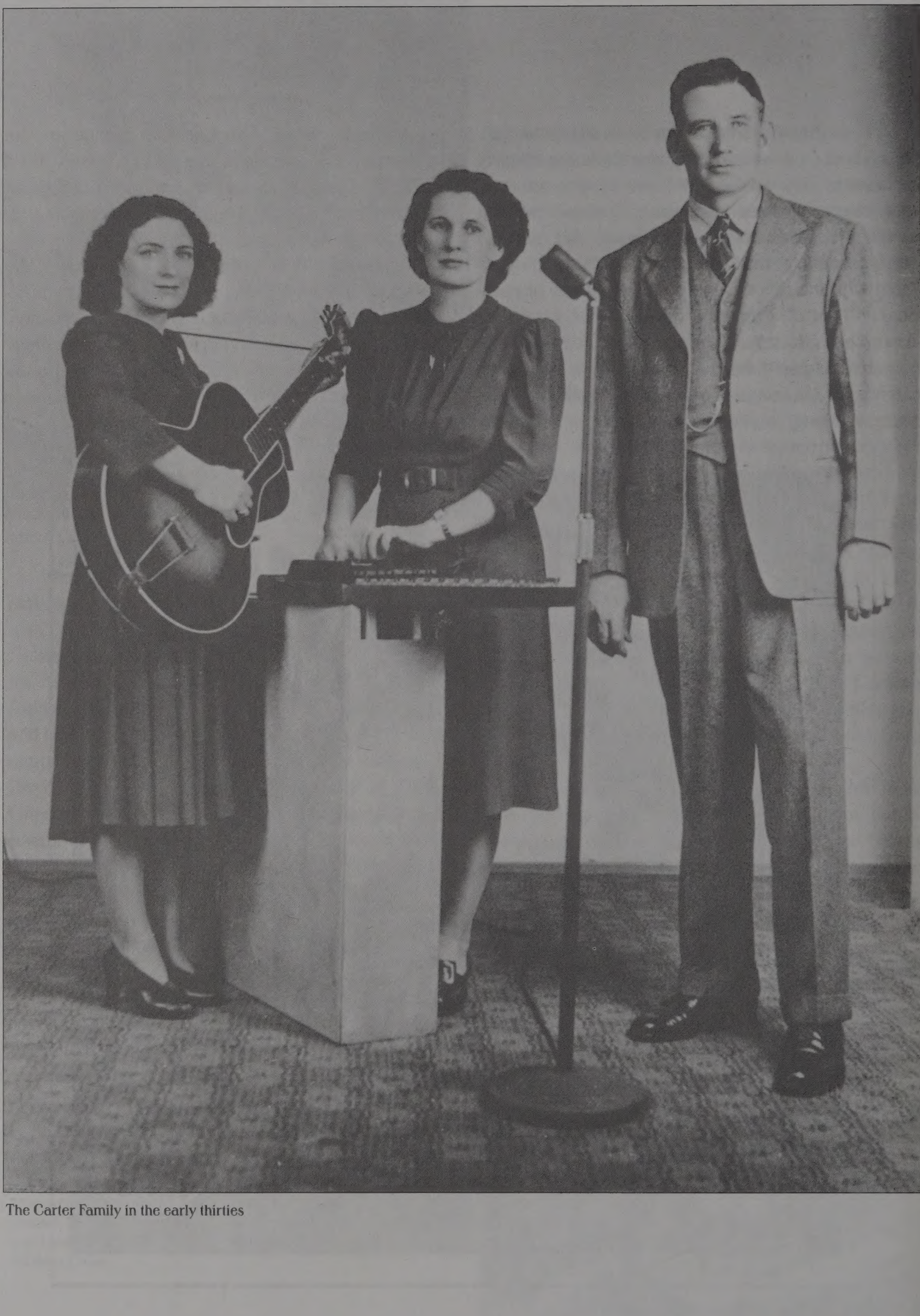


Hall of Fame Induction – Maybelle, peermusic's Roy Horton, and Sara in 1970

The Carter Family introduced an important guitar picking style and made guitar the main country instrument. Beyond that, they set the tone and attitude for country music as a whole. Their songs told a simple story, and their subject matter became the stuff of country music. It is interesting to compare them with the other pioneer and superstar of early country, Jimmie Rodgers. Almost the Carters' (or America's) alter ego, "America's Blue Yodeler" sang romantic and sentimental ballads, but he was more famous for his songs about hoboes, rambling, gambling, drinking, womanizing, jail, railroading, cowboys, and the blues. The Carters concentrated on everlasting love, lost love, the church, family, hard work, aged and dying parents, orphaned and dying children, longing for home, a love for the mountains, and a simple way of life.

As country music has evolved and grown, the Carter Family have come to represent the bedrock and the source of genuine country. Country and bluegrass performers continue to keep the Carter Family songs in circulation, and hopefully, their honest, unaffected style of country music will always be available for young audiences to hear and appreciate.





The Carter Family in the early thirties

Ralph Peer

Ralph S. Peer's discovery of the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers would have been enough to earn him a permanent place in country music history. But Peer made many other important contributions to music in his forty-year career as a publisher, talent scout and producer.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1892, Peer began working for OKeh Records in 1920. Before the Bristol Sessions, he had already supervised the first important blues hit record (Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues"), produced some of the first country records (by Fiddlin' John Carson, Ernest "Pop" Stoneman and others), and pioneered "field recording" with mobile equipment.

In 1926, Victor Records hired Peer as their expert on hillbilly music. He formed Southern Music Publishing Company and, in addition to scouting for "folk" talent, he worked with jazz pioneers Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie and Hoagy Carmichael. He signed and published music by Puerto Rican and Mexican composers, giving Latin music the world-wide attention it deserved and helping tunes like "Granada," "Perfidia" and "Frenesi" to become all-time standards.

Peer published countless World War II and post-war standards. In the 1950s he signed Perez Prado, who sparked the mambo craze, and he published many of the first rock artists, including Buddy Holly. Peer died in Hollywood in 1960, just a few years before "Not Fade Away," from his Buddy Holly catalog, became one of the first recordings by the Rolling Stones.

Guitar Styles
of the
Carter Family

Maybelle played guitar solos and backed up the singing on all the original Carter Family's recordings. She also sang harmony to Sara's lead vocal. Sara filled out the rhythm by strumming autoharp or playing a very basic, unornamented "Carter scratch" on guitar, and A.P. added bass vocals, rarely playing guitar.

Tuning and Capos

Maybelle Carter favored the key of C, and she often used a capo or tuned her guitar several frets lower than usual in order to play in different keys while using the C chords and licks. For example, she capoed up four frets to play "Gathering Flowers from the Hillside" in the key of E; a C chord is really an E when you're capoed up four frets. She tuned down four frets to play "Can the Circle Be Unbroken" in the key of A♭, because a C chord is an A♭ when you're tuned down four frets.

Throughout the transcriptions that follow, the chord letter-names above the music are in respect to Maybelle's guitar. For example, in "Can the Circle Be Unbroken," when she frets a C chord the letter-name written above the music is C, even though she's tuned low and the actual sounding chord is A♭.

Sometimes Sara's autoharp was tuned a bit high or low, and the women appeared to be playing in unusual keys, or "between keys" (e.g., somewhere between B and B♭). On "Little Moses," Sara played in B♭, but her B♭ was so low that Maybelle had to tune down three frets (rather than two frets) to match the autoharp. (When the guitar is tuned two frets lower than usual, a C chord sounds like a B♭.)

Extra Beats and Changing Tempos

Many Carter Family arrangements feature "extra bars," or bars with "extra" beats (bars of 6/4; the chorus of "Can the Circle Be Unbroken" offers a typical example). They sound "extra" to modern listeners because polished, contemporary players invariably smooth out these rough edges when they play tunes derived from mountain music. But these "irregularities" were a characteristic part of the '30s string band sound. The old-time bands added these beats on purpose, to tighten up the vocals (leaving shorter pauses) and to make the music less predictable and homogenized. Who says all songs have to be eight or sixteen bars long? Usually, the Carters used "extra" beats or bars consistently; for example, they played the same bars of 6/4 during every verse of "Circle," and left out the "extra" beats during guitar solos. Occasionally a bar was extended two beats because of the singer's momentary whim.

Tempos were flexible on Carter Family recordings. Tunes often picked up momentum and sped up, gradually. They also tended to speed up during instrumental solos and then slow down again, very slightly, for vocals. The tempo markings given at the beginning of each tune represent the song's "average" tempo.

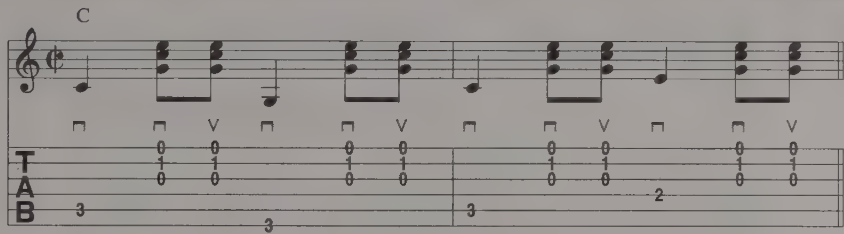
The Carter Scratch

Maybelle used a thumbpick and fingerpicks to play the "Carter Scratch," which is what she called her basic rhythm lick when she taught it to her daughter June and granddaughter Carlene Carter. She played melody and bass runs with her thumb and brushed down and up with her fingers. Carlene Carter says her grandmother's middle finger was constantly strumming. Countless guitarists have imitated the sound using a flatpick.

Here's the basic lick:

1. Pick a bass string with your thumb.
2. Brush down on the two or three highest (treble) strings with the nail of your index or middle finger.
3. Brush up on the treble strings with your index or middle finger.

As in the example below, alternate thumb/bass notes when playing rhythm, picking the root and fifth (e.g., in the C chord below, play a bass C and then a bass G) or root and third (C and E).

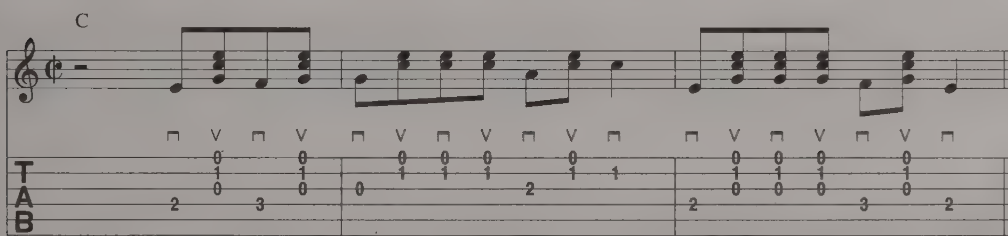


Once the basic scratch lick flows smoothly, add another stroke between the first two: brush *up* on the treble strings with your index finger. This fills out the rhythm. Occasionally, Maybelle included the extra upstroke, often alternating it with the basic lick, as shown in her backup during the vocal in "Wildwood Flower." She played an upstroke on the treble strings between bass/melody notes, as well:

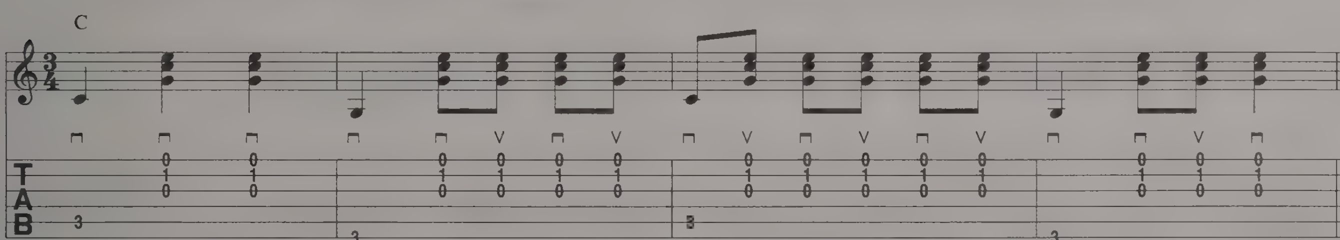
The Carter scratch with an extra upstroke:



Playing melody and brushing up on the treble strings:



Here's the Carter scratch in 3/4 (waltz) time:



Bass Runs

Maybelle peppered her "Carter scratch" accompaniment with bass runs, which connect one chord to the next. Here are some of her favorites:

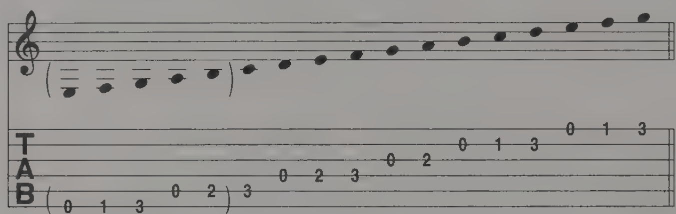
C to F — C to F — G7 to C (or F to C) — C to G7



Playing Melody on the Bass Strings

To become adept at picking out melodies on the bass strings, Carter-style, learn the C major scale:

C Major Scale



This exercise will help you become familiar with the C scale:

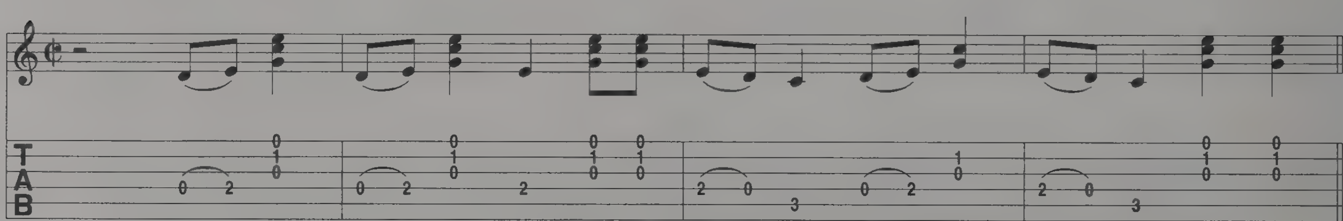


Hammer-ons and Pull-offs

Hammering-on is sounding a note with your fretting hand. After picking a note, you fret it suddenly and forcefully, thus getting two notes for the price of one.

Pulling-off is another way to sound a note with your fretting hand: after picking a note, you scrape downward with the fretting finger. Here's how hammering-on and pulling-off embellish the Carter scratch:

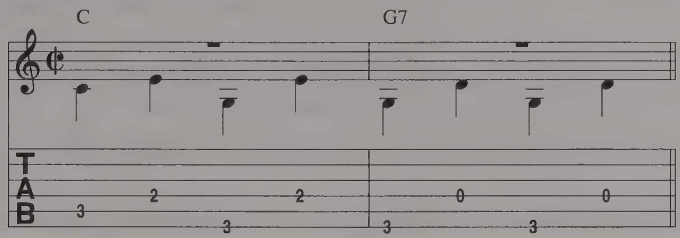
From "East Virginia Blues"



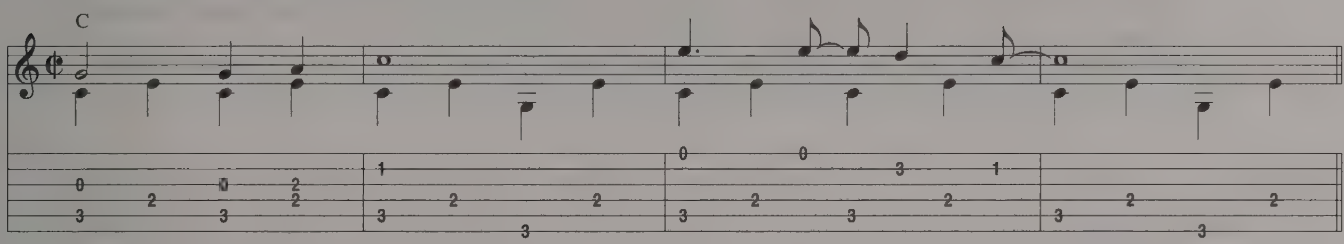
Fingerpicking

On "Cannonball" and a few other tunes, Maybelle used a "raggy blues" fingerpicking style she learned from Lesley Riddle. She played an alternating bass with her thumb while picking melody notes with her index finger. Many people get the same effect using the thumb and two fingers:

Alternating bass:



Picking melody while playing alternating bass:

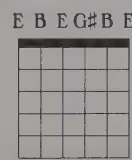


Slide Guitar

Maybelle received coaching from Lesley Riddle in her slide technique. In the African-American blues tradition, she tuned her guitar to the open chord that corresponded to a song's key. For instance, to play "Little Darling Pal of Mine" in E, Maybelle tuned to an E chord. To play "Foggy Mountain Top" in A, she tuned to an open A chord. Both open tunings were used by blues slide players of the day like Son House, Charlie Patton and Kokomo Arnold.

Like many Hawaiian and country players (and some blues players) of the 1920s, Maybelle played slide lap-style. She detuned, inserted a raised nut to heighten her strings' action and fretted the strings "overhand" with a steel, like modern country steel and Dobro players.

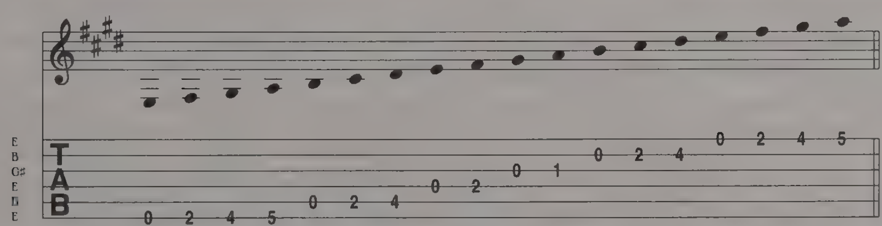
To get to open E from standard tuning, tune the strings to the notes you fret when playing an E chord:

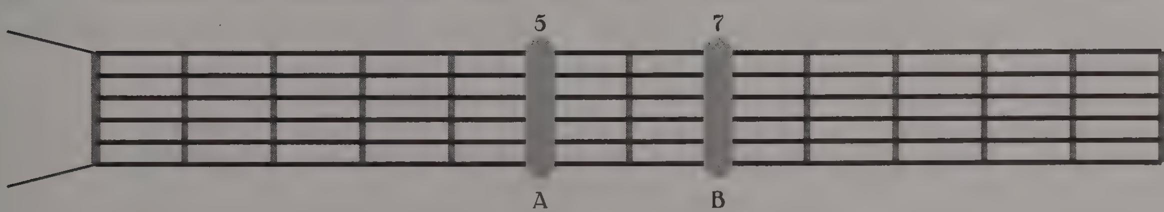


- Tune the 5th (A) and 4th (D) strings up two frets, to B and E.
- Tune the 3rd (G) string up one fret, to G♯.

Melody notes can be found in the E major scale, below, or within the barred IV (A) and V (B) chords:

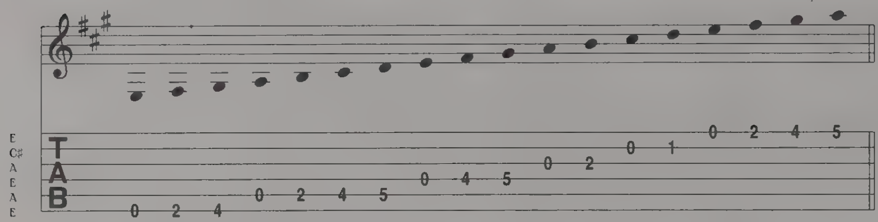
E Major Scale (Open E Tuning):



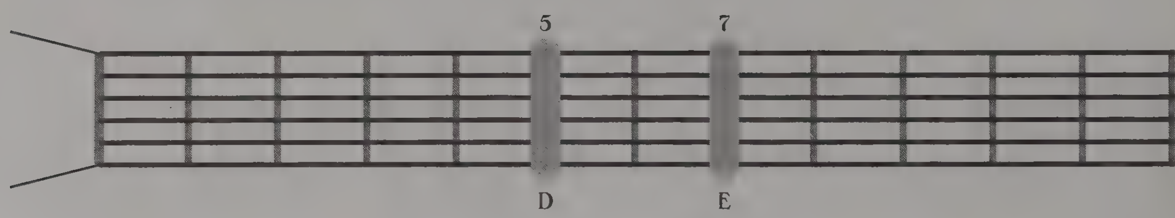


Similarly, tune to open A from standard tuning by tuning the 4th, 3rd and 2nd strings two frets higher than usual. This matches the way they are fretted when you play an A chord in standard tuning. Here's the A major scale and barred chords:

A Major Scale (Open A Tuning):





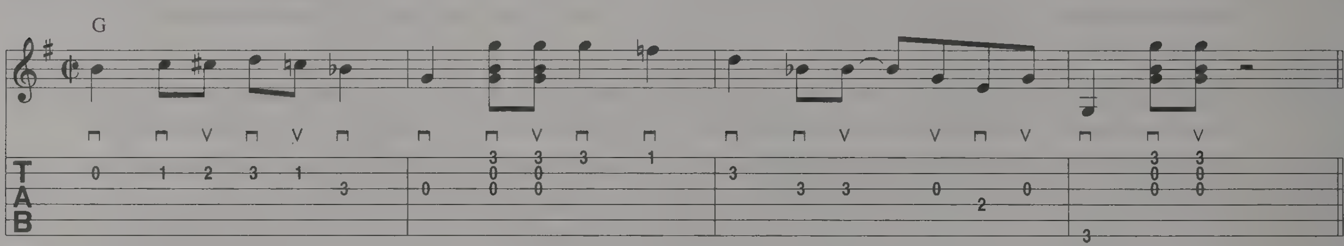


Flatpicking

Maybelle flatpicked on a few Carter Family songs, often in the key of G. She played rapid, bluesy licks, anticipating the styles of Doc Watson and Clarence White, who revolutionized flatpicking country guitar in the 1960s. "Coal Miner's Blues" (in this book) and "Jealous Hearted Me" feature her flatpicking style.

Like most flatpickers, she played downstrokes on the downbeats and upstrokes on the upbeats:

From "Coal Miner's Blues



The Carter's Contribution

Maybelle Carter is a giant influence in country guitar. In the 1920s and '30s, even more than today, very few women were featured instrumental soloists. Yet as a versatile young woman, she brought guitar to the front and center of the country music stage, and revolutionized the way it was played. The Carter scratch is still a fundamental country guitar style, although most guitarists use a flatpick to approximate Maybelle's sound, and they play in the other first position keys (E, A, D and G) as well as in Maybelle's favorite, C. Much fancier picking styles have been popularized, but for a down-to-earth country sound, you can't beat the Carter scatch.

The songs are also still relevant. They are the foundation of country music. Many of them are country standards, over seventy years after they were recorded. At bluegrass festivals, every third or fourth tune is a Carter Family song. The Carter "catalog" is a treasure trove of songs that stands on its own, and it is essential listening for anyone who wants to understand country music, country guitar picking and the attitudes and soul of country lyrics.

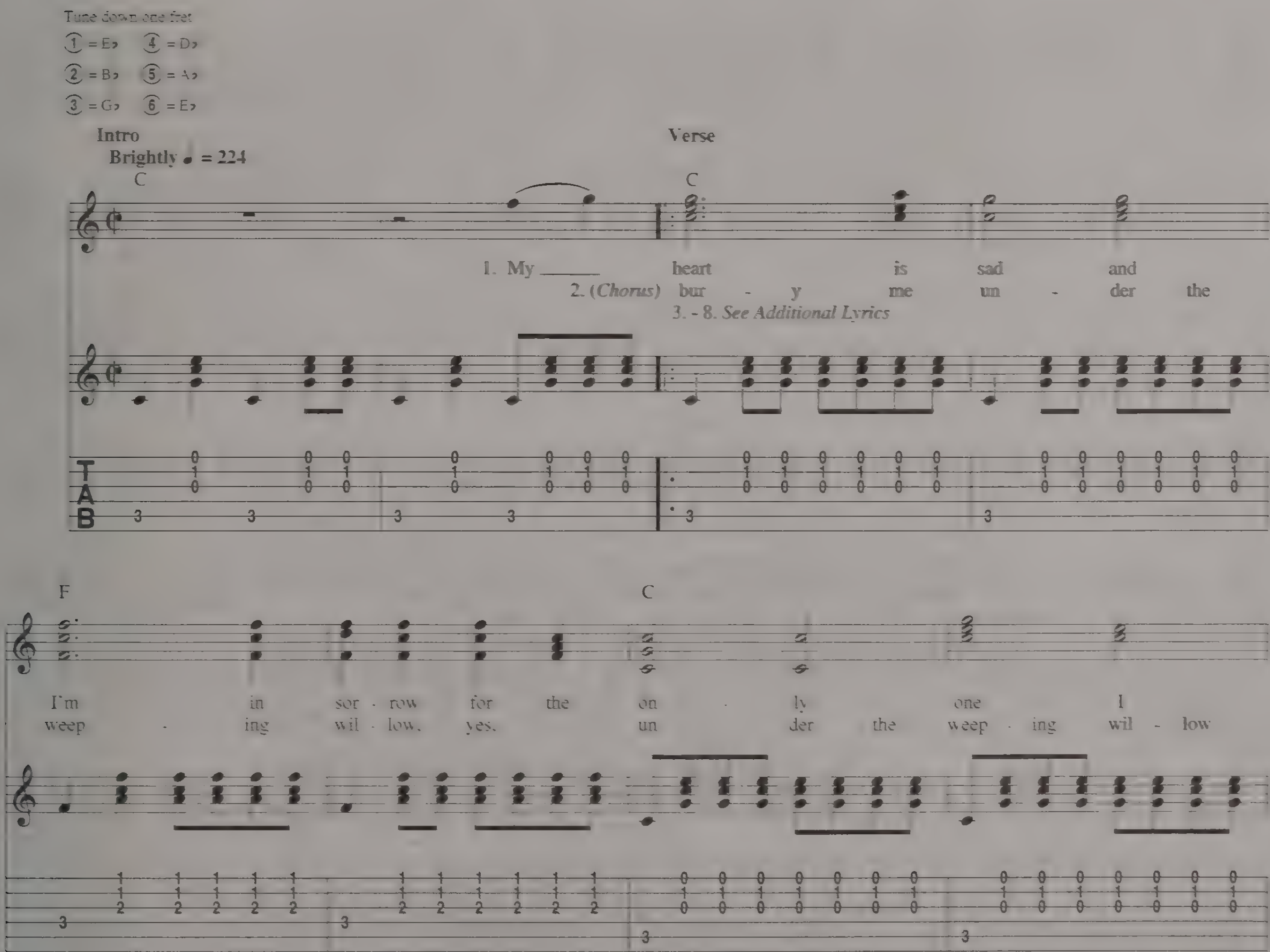
Bury Me Under the Weeping Willow

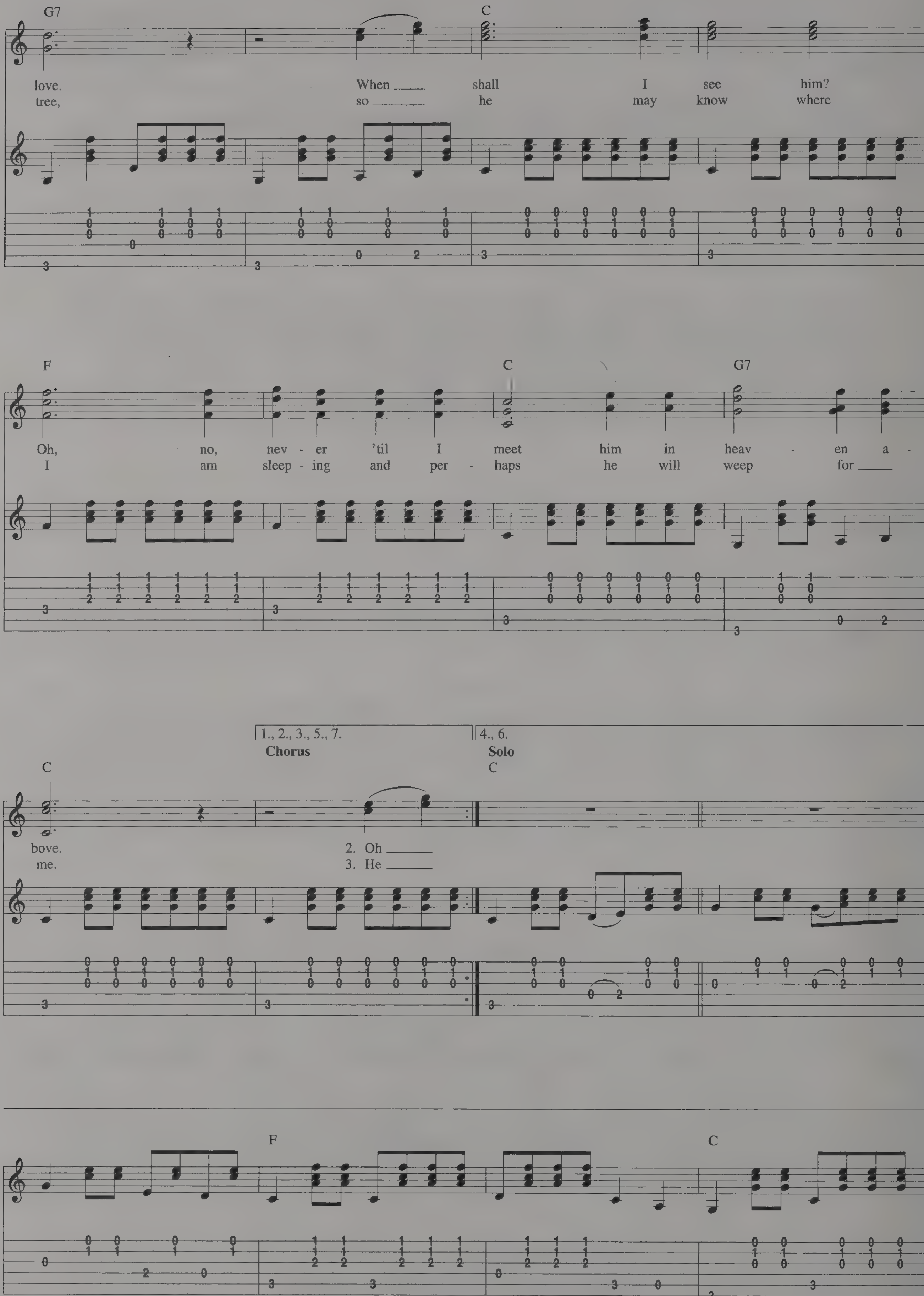
Words and Music by A.P. Carter, Maybelle Carter and Sara Carter

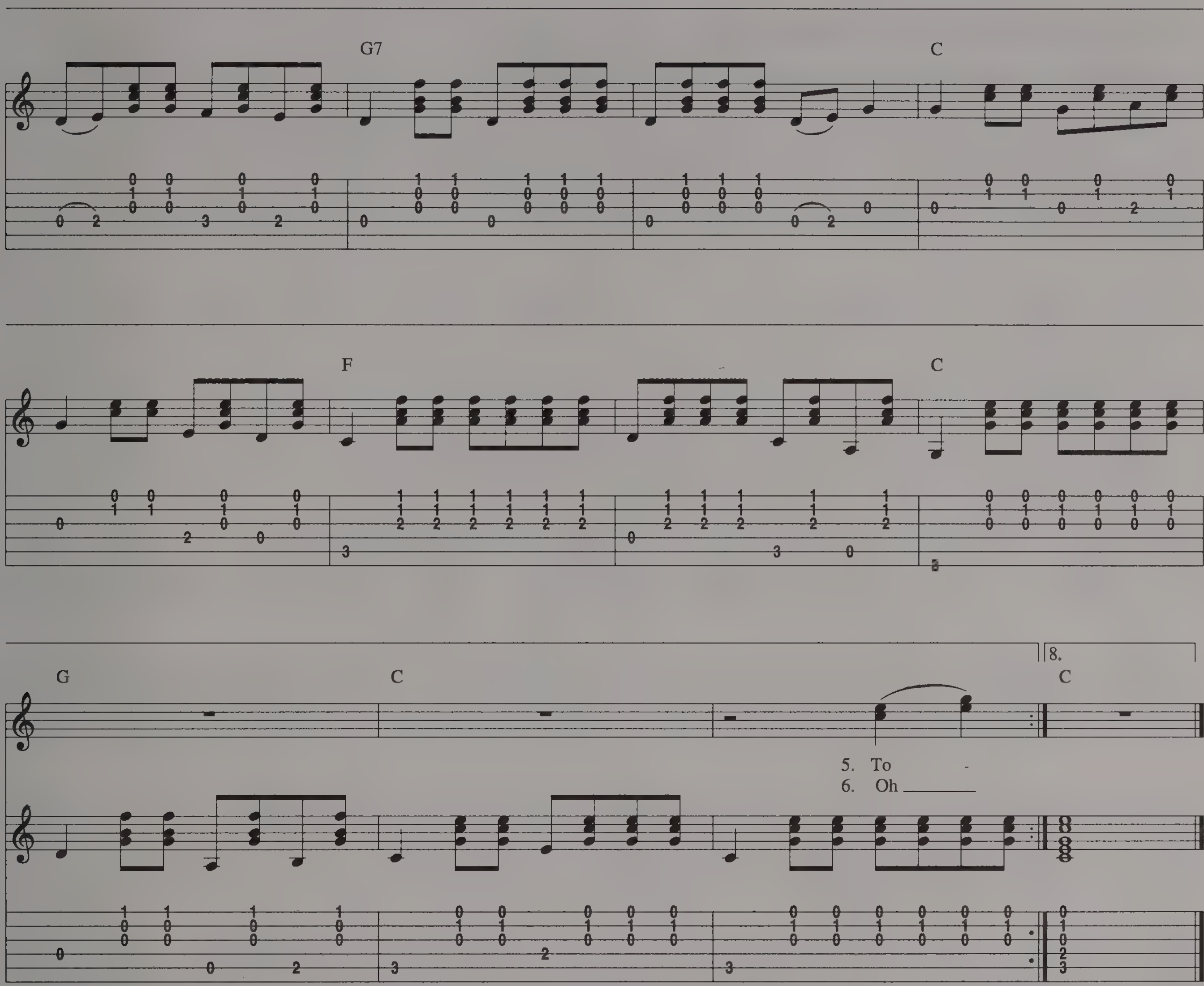
The Carters arrived at the fateful August 1, 1927 recording session at Bristol, Tennessee with some difficulty. Their Model A Ford got stuck in a stream, and everybody had to push it out. In addition, A.P. fixed three flat tires out in the middle of nowhere. Maybelle was eight months pregnant at the time, and other Carter children were along for the ride.

The first song they recorded was "Bury Me Under the Weeping Willow," a 19th century parlor song Sara and Maybelle had known since childhood. Sara played the autoharp on her lap, so she and Maybelle sat, while A.P. hovered near the microphone. Maybelle played guitar and all three sang. Ralph Peer was immediately impressed with Sara's voice and the group's professionalism and efficiency.

During the song's vocals, Maybelle played less bass notes and did more "scrubbing" (brushing up and down on the treble strings) than usual. Her melodic solo was a typical example of the style she made famous.




G7
C
love. When ___ shall I see him?
tree, so ___ he may know where
F
C
G7
Oh, no, nev - er 'til I meet him in heav - en a -
I am sleep - ing and per - haps he will weep for ___
1., 2., 3., 5., 7.
Chorus
4., 6.
Solo
C
bove. 2. Oh ___
me. 3. He ___
F
C



Additional Lyrics

2. **Chorus:**

   Oh bury me under the weeping willow, yes under the weeping willow tree,
   so he may know where I am sleeping and perhaps he will weep for me.

3. He told me that he did not love me, I could not believe it was true,
   until an angel softly whispered, "He is proving untrue to you."

4. **Chorus**

5. Tomorrow was our wedding day, but oh, Lord, oh where is he?
   He's gone to seek him another bride and he cares no more for me.

6. **Chorus**

7. Oh bury me under waters blue to prove my love to him.
   Tell him that I would die to save him, for his love I never could win.

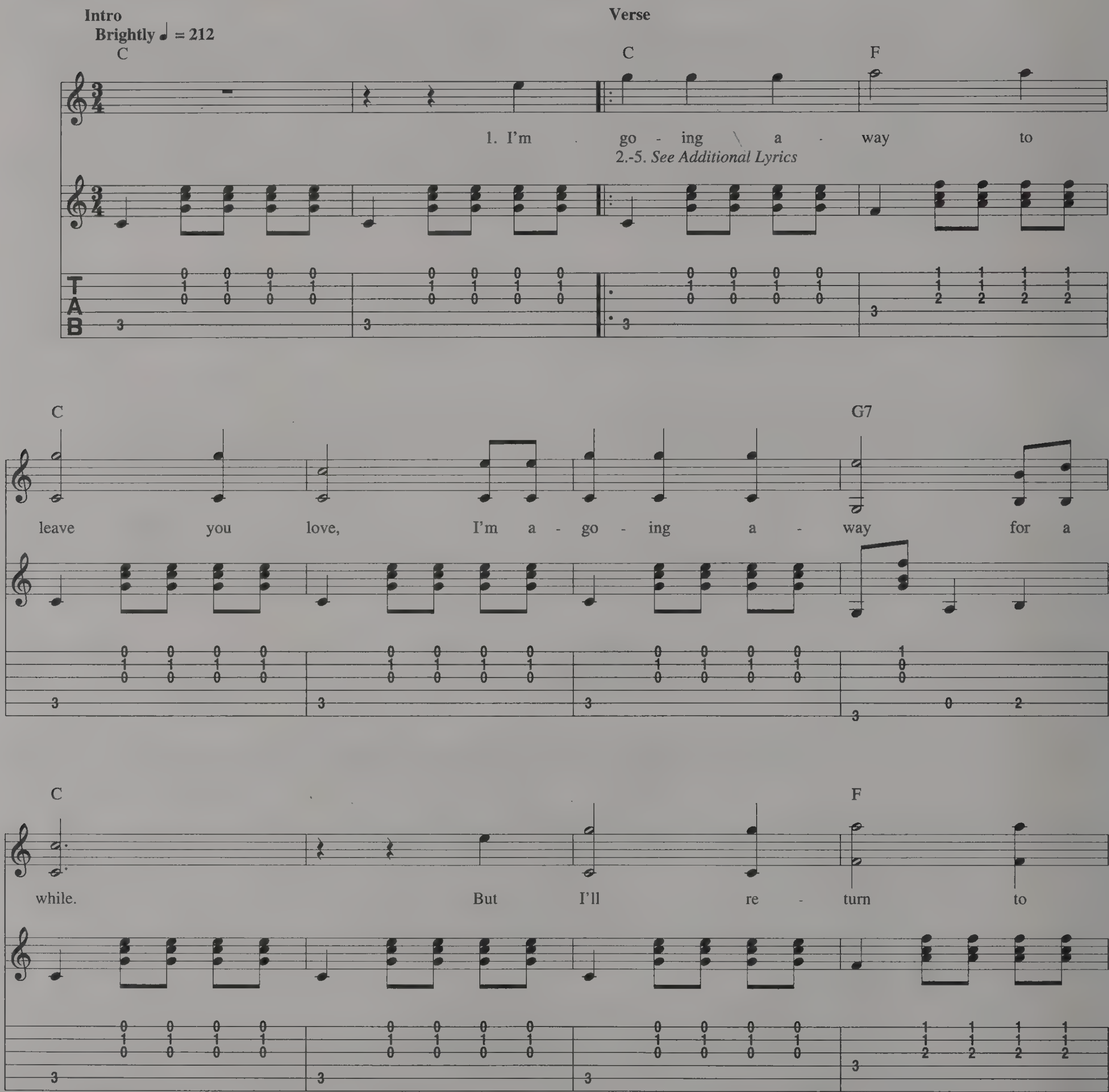
8. **Chorus**

Storms Are on the Ocean

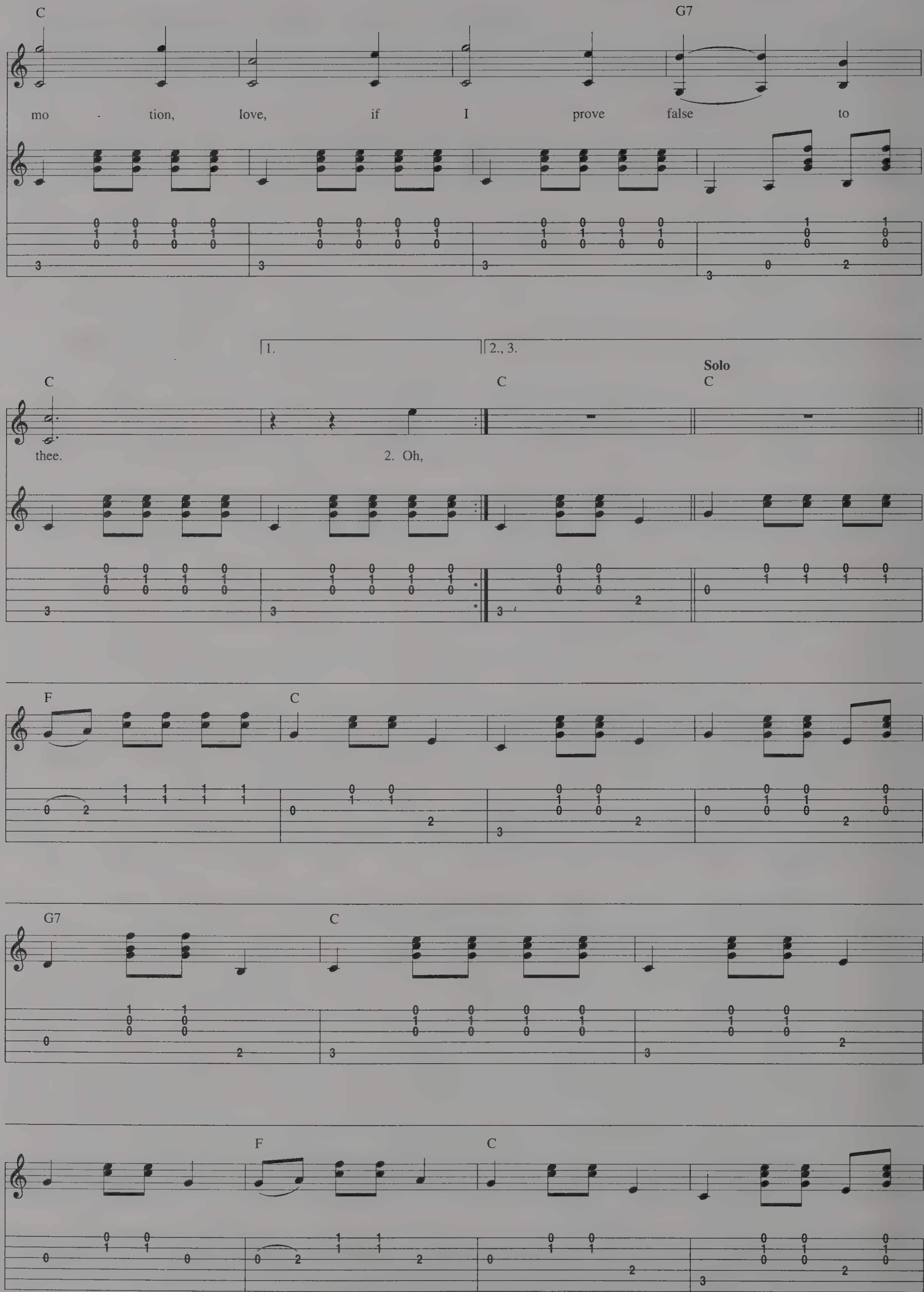
Words and Music by A.P. Carter, Maybelle Carter and Sara Carter

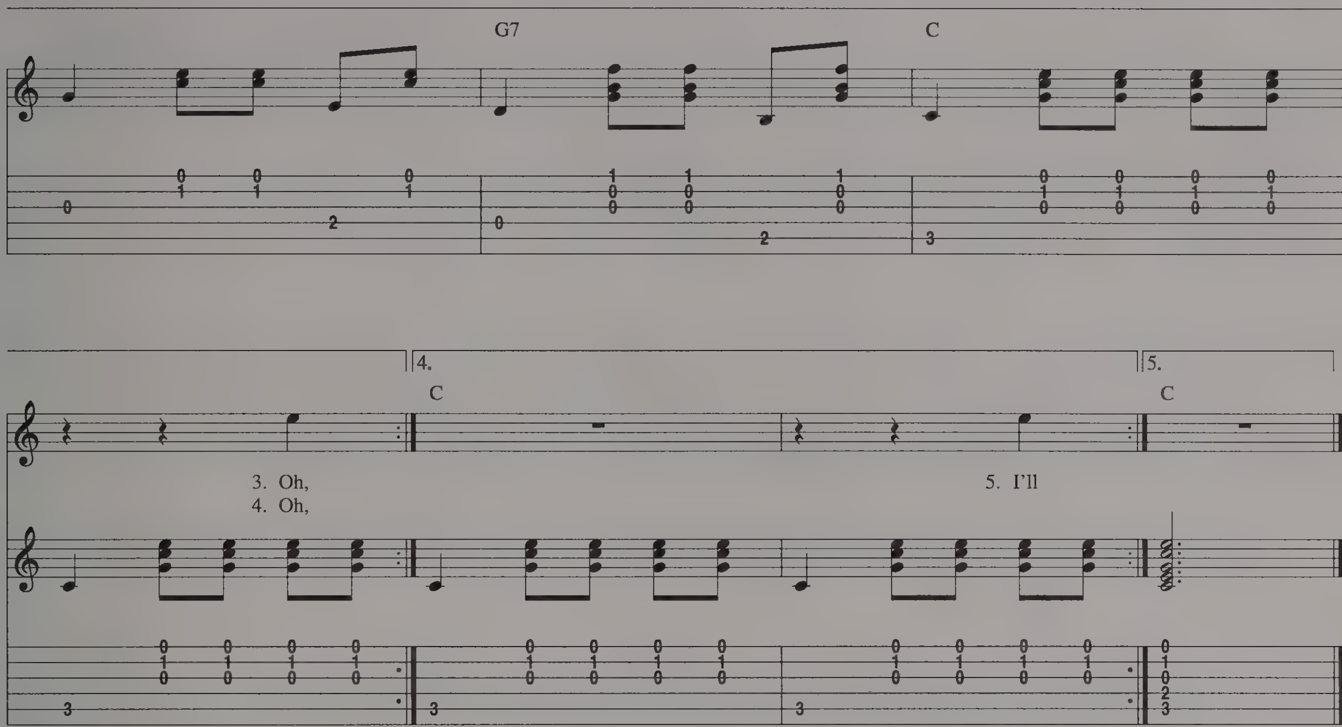
"Storms Are on the Ocean" was also recorded at the Bristol sessions. The trio sang their interpretation of an old Scottish ballad they had known for years. It was released in early 1928, the second Carter record to come out that year (after "The Poor Orphan Child"/"Wandering Boy").

Tuning
①= E♭ ④= D♭
②= B♭ ⑤= A♭
③= G♭ ⑥= E♭




C
G7
you some - time if I go ten thou - sand
C
Chorus
F
miles. The storms are on the
C
G7
o - cean, the heav - ens may cease to
C
F
be. This world may lose its


C
G7
mo - tion, love, if I prove false to
C
1.
2., 3.
Solo
C
C
thee.
2. Oh,
F
C
G7
C
F
C



Additional Lyrics

2. Oh, who will dress your pretty little feet, oh who will glove your hand?
Oh, who will kiss your rosy red cheeks when I'm in the far off land? (Chorus)

3. Oh, papa will dress my pretty little feet and mama will glove my hand.
You may kiss my rosy red cheeks when you return again. (Chorus)

4. Oh, have you seen those mournful doves flying from pine to pine,
a-mourning for their own true love just like I mourn for mine? (Chorus)

5. I'll never go back on the ocean, love, I'll never go back on the sea.
I'll never go back from the blue-eyed girl 'til she goes back on me. (Chorus)

Little Darling Pal of Mine

Words and Music by A.P. Carter

In the spring of 1928, the the Carter Family received a sizable royalty check for the records made at Bristol. A few weeks later Ralph Peer, impressed with the Carters' record sales, invited them to a second recording session, to be held at Victor's studios in Camden, New Jersey. It was the same facility in which Jimmie Rodgers made his first records after the Bristol sessions.

Nearly all the songs the Carters recorded on May 9 and 10, 1928 became hits and, ultimately, country and folk standards. "Little Darling Pal of Mine" provided Woody Guthrie with the basis for his classic tune, "This Land is Your Land." The song has been recorded by Doc Watson, Lucinda Williams, the New Lost City Ramblers, Joan Baez and many others.

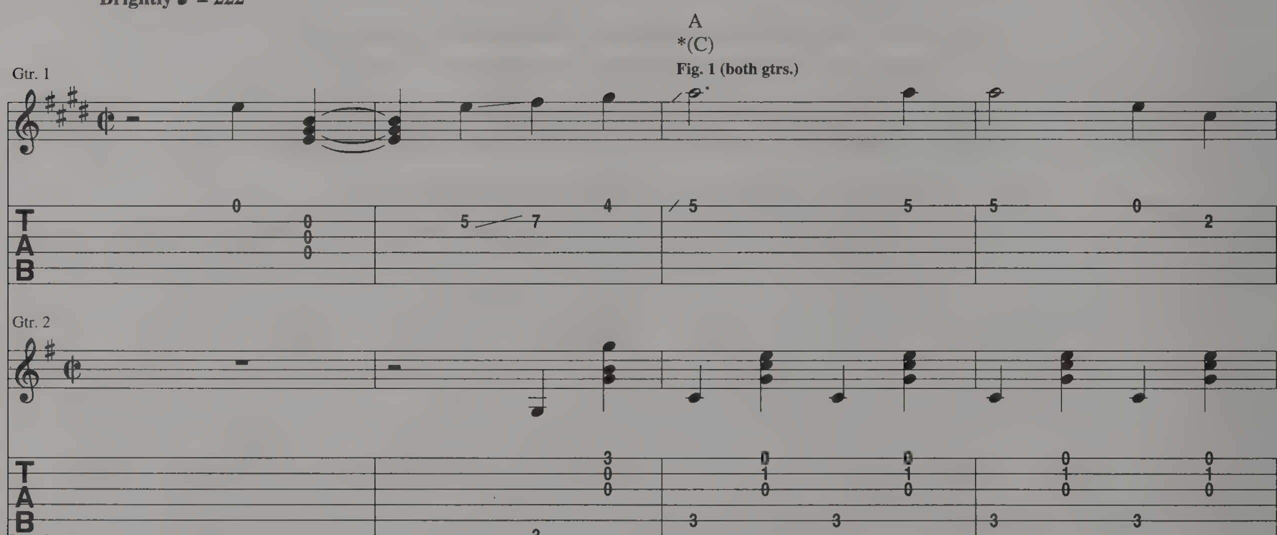
Maybelle played slide in open E tuning on "Little Darling" in the style she had learned from Lesley Riddle. Like most slide guitarists of the era, she played the melody during vocals and on solos. She used the E major scale shown in the introduction, *Guitar Styles of the Carter Family.*

Gtr. 1 open E tuning:
① = E ④ = E
② = B ⑤ = B
③ = G♯ ⑥ = E

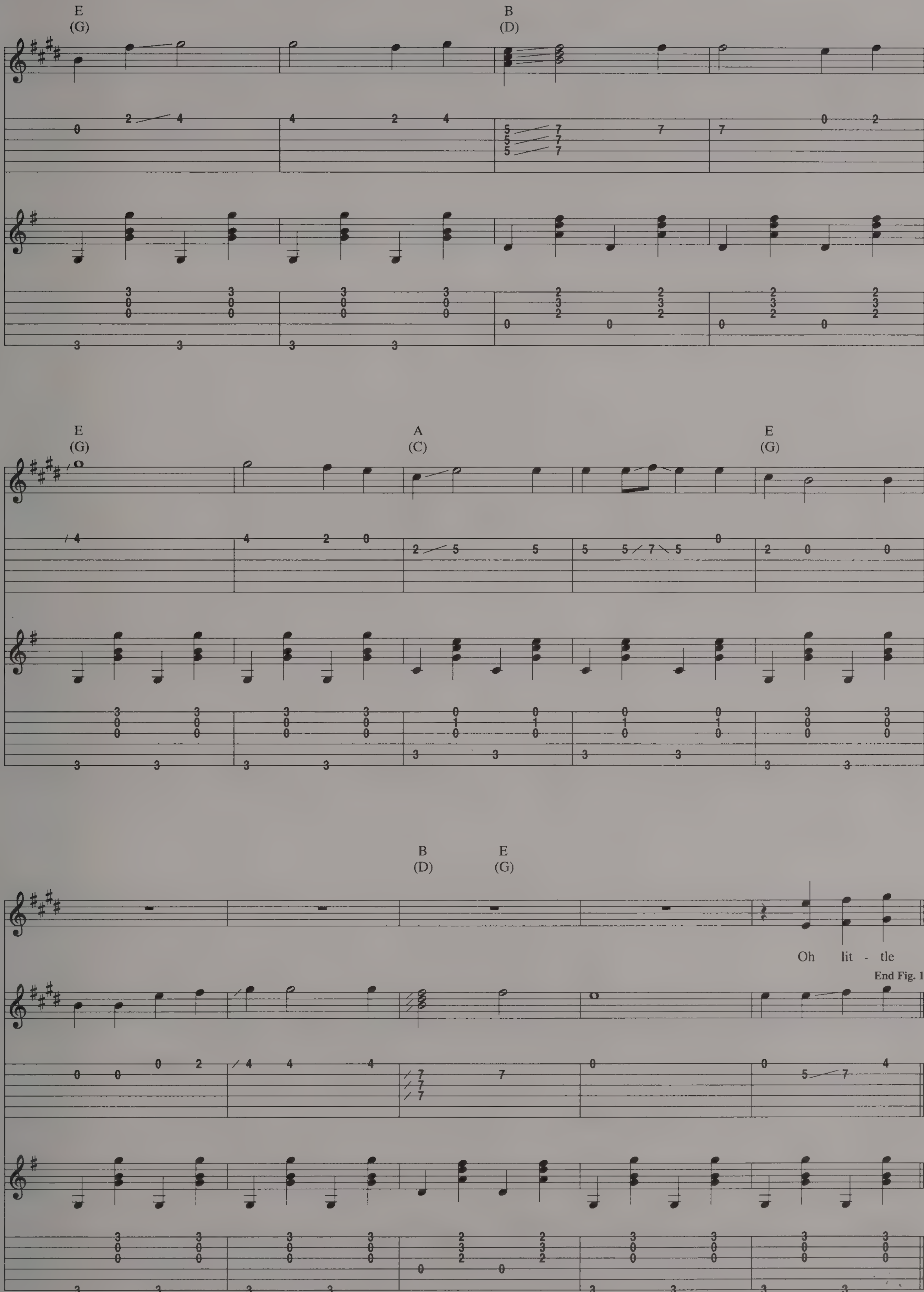
Gtr. 2 tuned down 3 frets
① = D♭ ④ = B
② = A♭ ⑤ = G♭
③ = E ⑥ = D♭

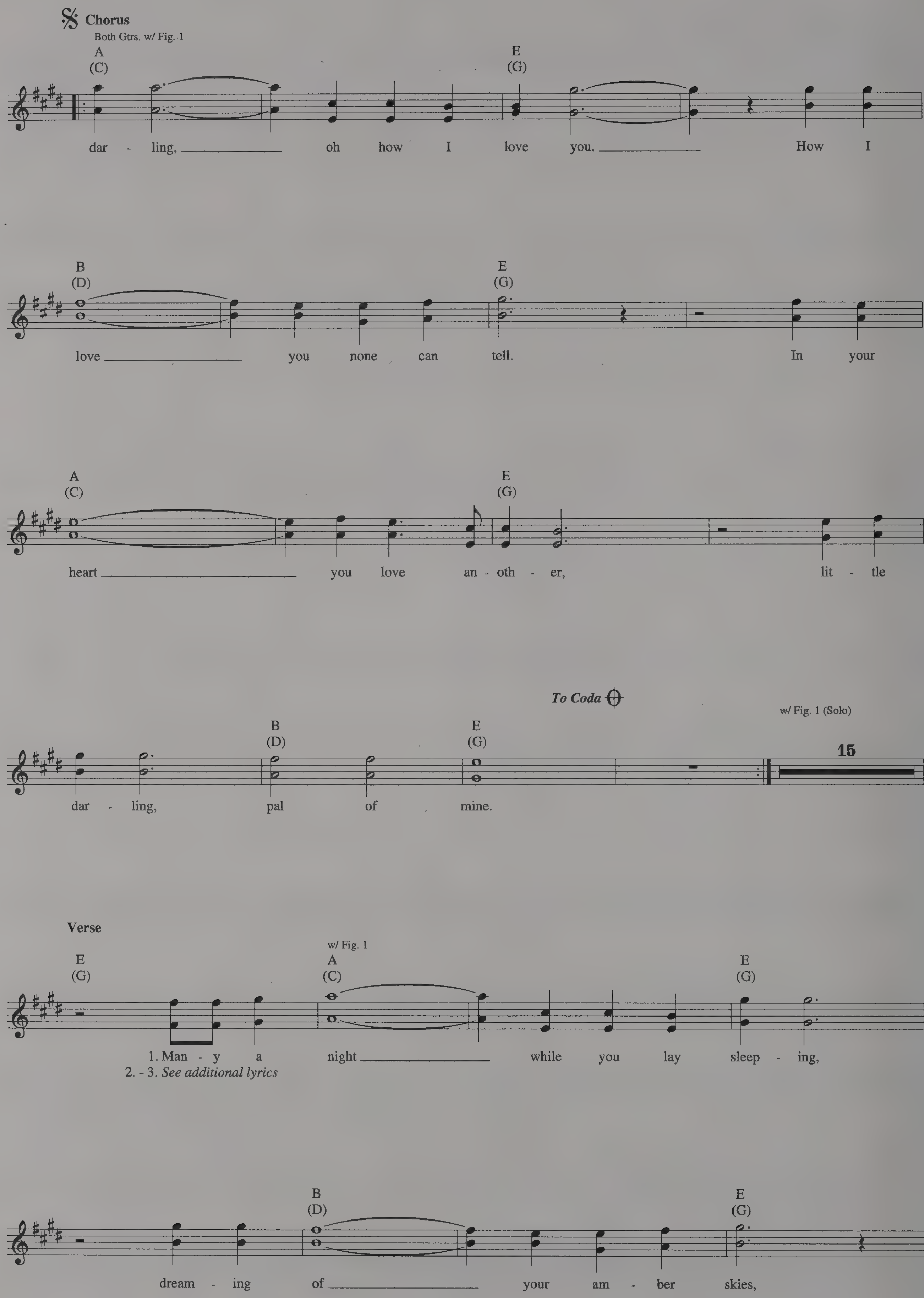
Solo

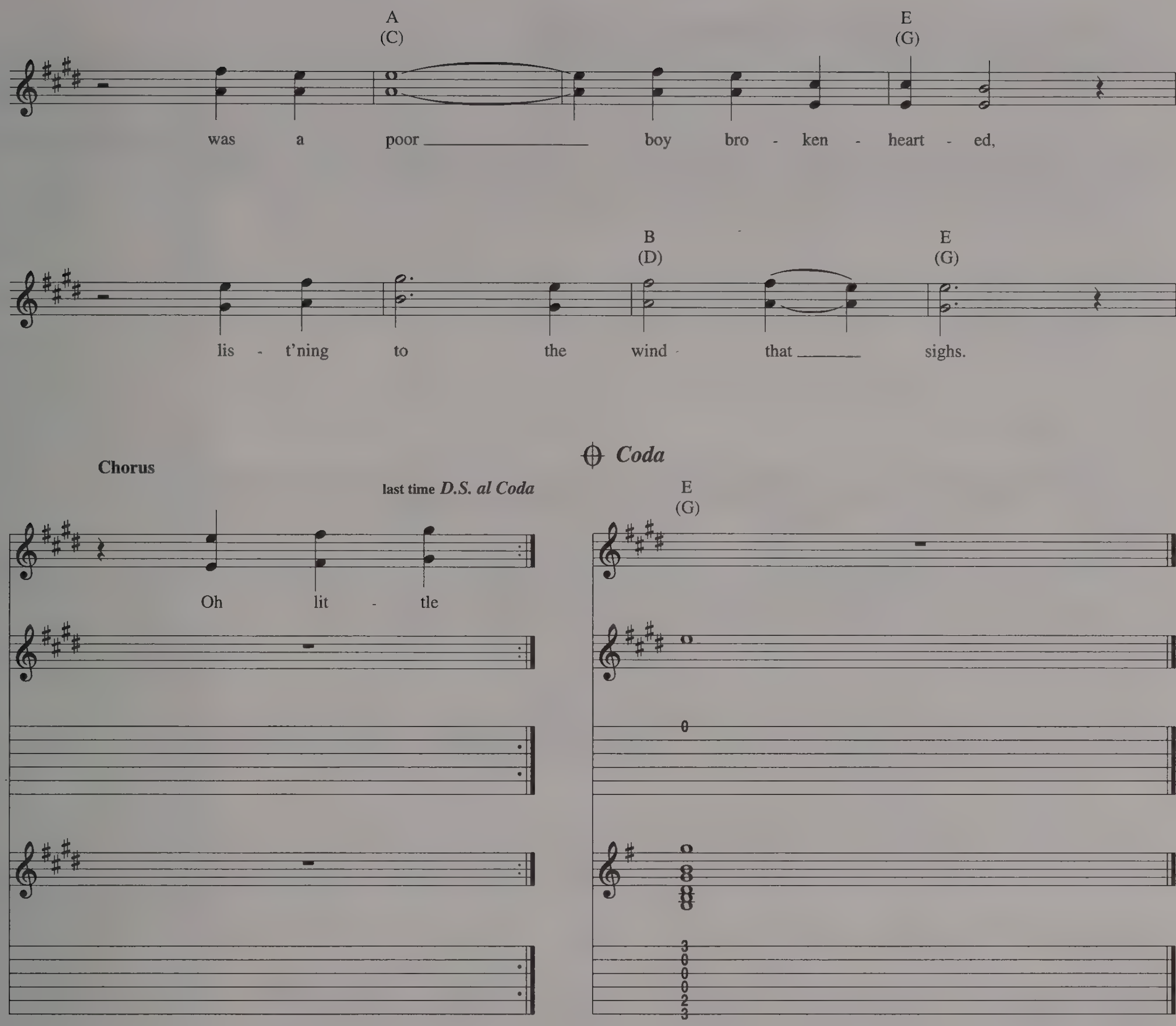
Brightly ♩ = 222



* Symbols in parenthesis represent chord names respective to Gtr. 2. Symbols above represent actual sounding chord.


E
(G)
B
(D)
E
(G)
A
(C)
E
(G)
B
(D)
E
(G)
Oh lit - tle
End Fig. 1


Chorus
Both Gtrs. w/ Fig. 1
A (C) E (G)
dar - ling, oh how I love you. How I
B (D) E (G)
love you none can tell. In your
A (C) E (G)
heart you love an - oth - er, lit - tle
To Coda
w/ Fig. 1 (Solo)
15
B (D) E (G)
dar - ling, pal of mine.
Verse
w/ Fig. 1
E (G) A (C) E (G)
1. Man - y a night while you lay sleep - ing,
2. - 3. See additional lyrics
B (D) E (G)
dream - ing of your am - ber skies,



Additional Lyrics

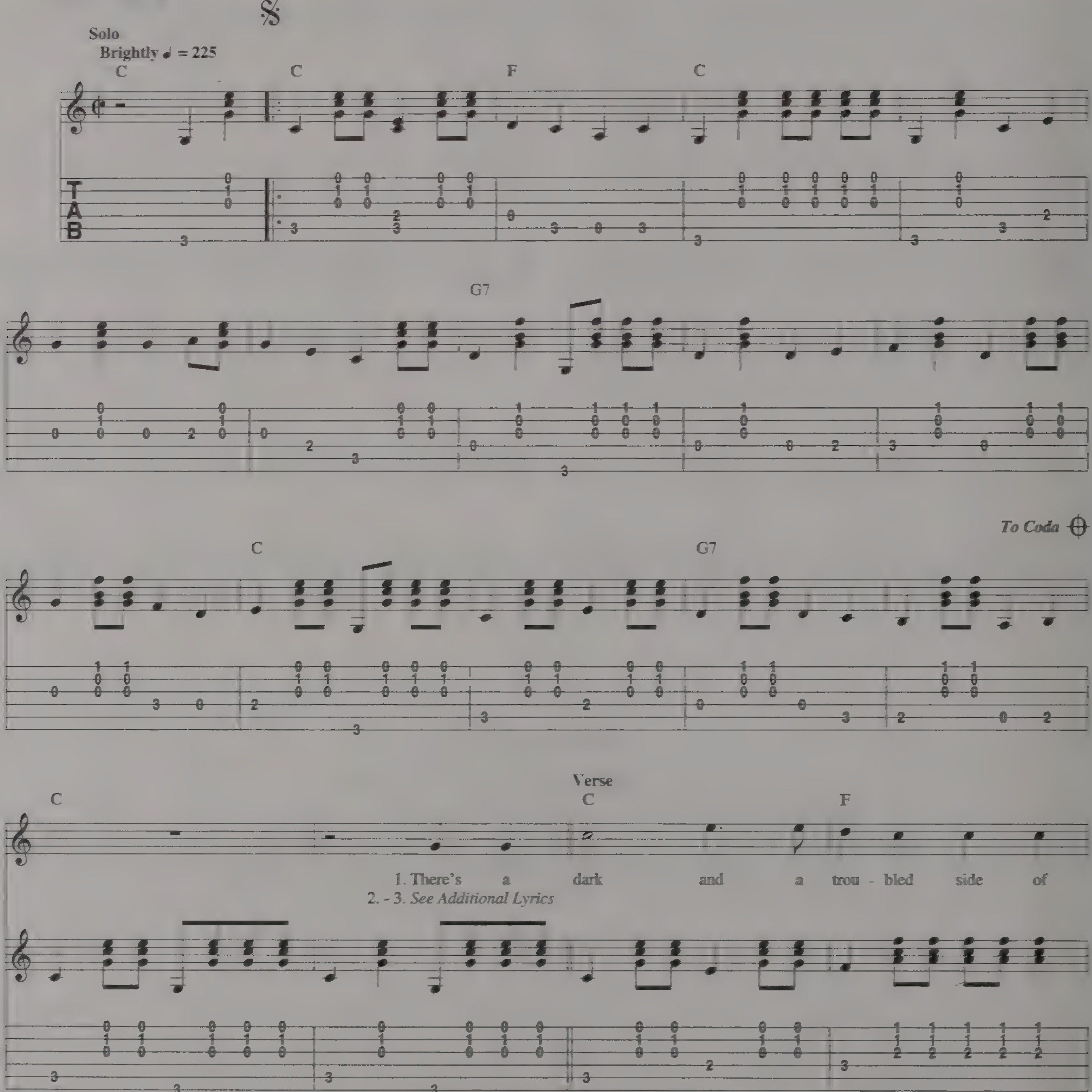
2. Many a day with you I rambled, happiest hours with you I spent.
   Thought I had your heart forever, but I find it's only lent.
3. There is just three things I wish for, that's my casket, shroud and grave.
   When I'm dead, don't weep for me, just kiss those lips that you betrayed.

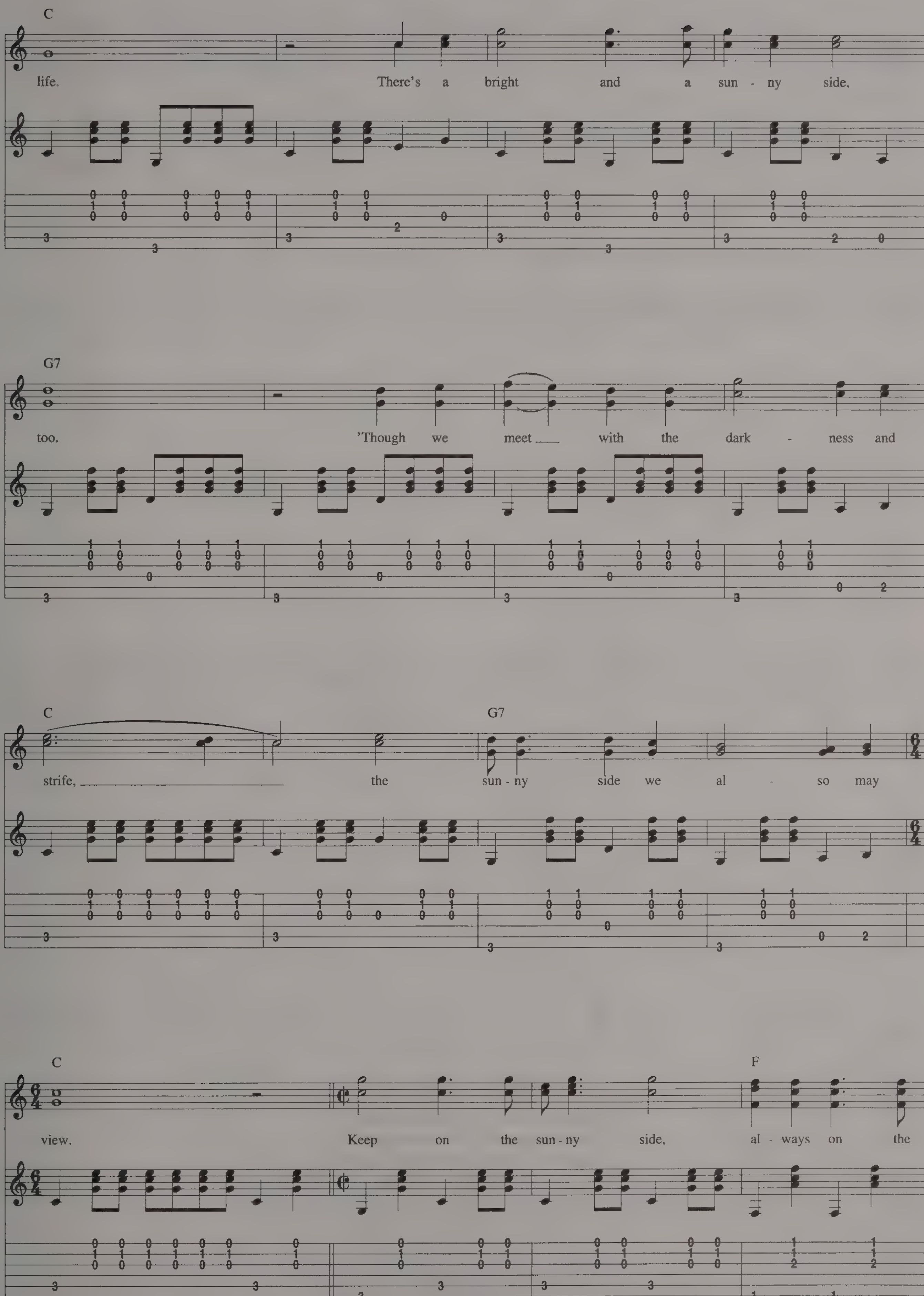
Keep on the Sunny Side

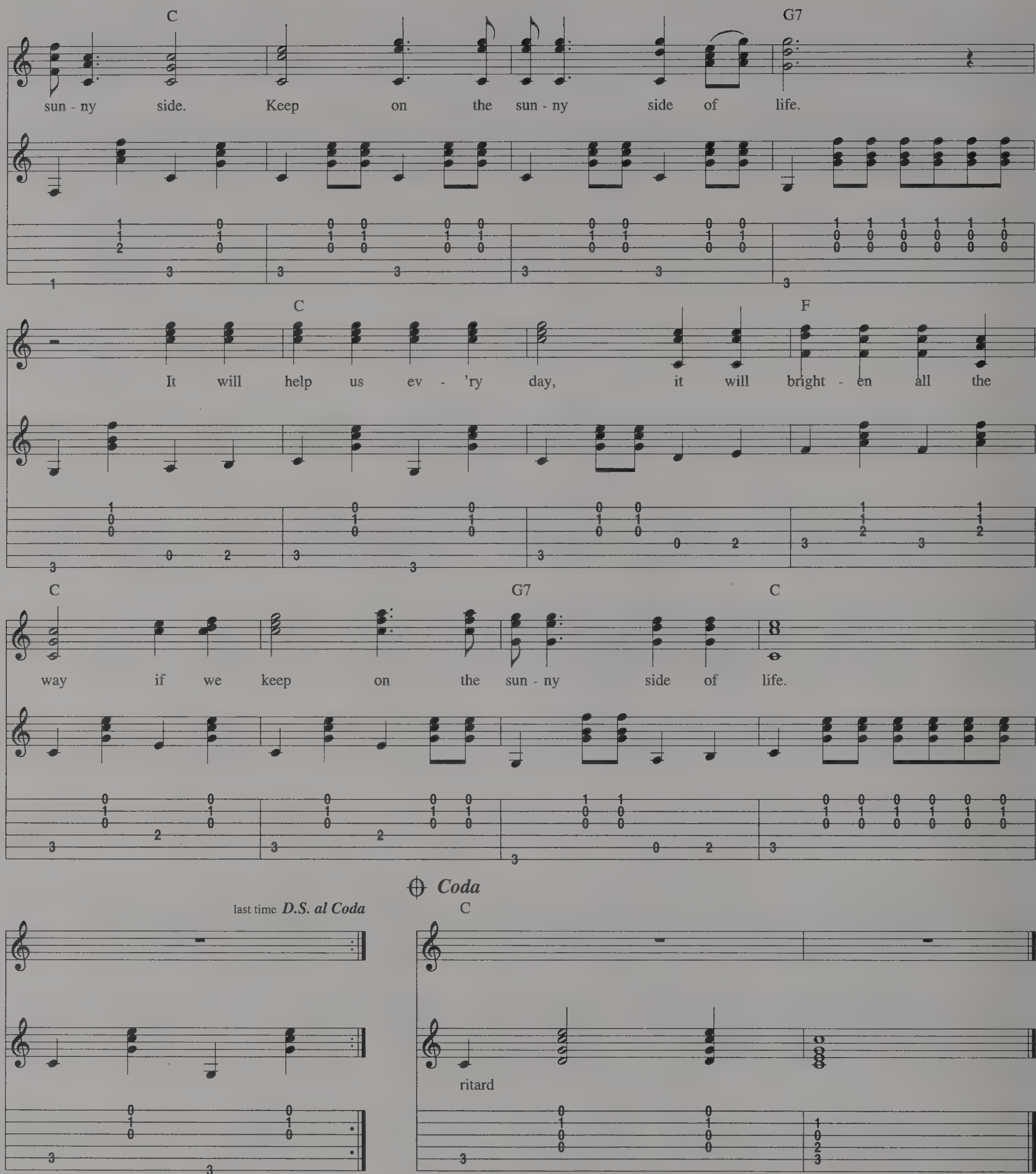
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

"Keep on the Sunny Side," recorded during the 1928 Camden sessions, became the Carters' theme song at concerts and radio shows. They based it on a turn-of-the-century gospel tune whose lyric was inspired by a wheelchair-bound gentleman who always wanted his chair pushed on the sunny side of street. The Carters were the first to record the tune. A bronze disc with the song's title is embedded in A.P.'s tombstone.

Tuned down 1 fret
① = E♭ ④ = D♭
② = B♭ ⑤ = A♭
③ = G♭ ⑥ = E♭




C
life. There's a bright and a sun - ny side,
G7
too. 'Though we meet with the dark - ness and
C
strife, the
G7
sun - ny side we al - so may
C
view. Keep on the sun - ny side,
F
al - ways on the



Additional Lyrics

2. The storm and its fury break today,
crushing hopes that we cherish so dear.
Clouds and storm will, in time, pass away,
the sun again will shine bright and clear.

3. Let us greet with a song of hope each day,
though the moment be cloudy or fair.
Let us trust in our Saviour away,
who keepeth ev'ryone, in His care.

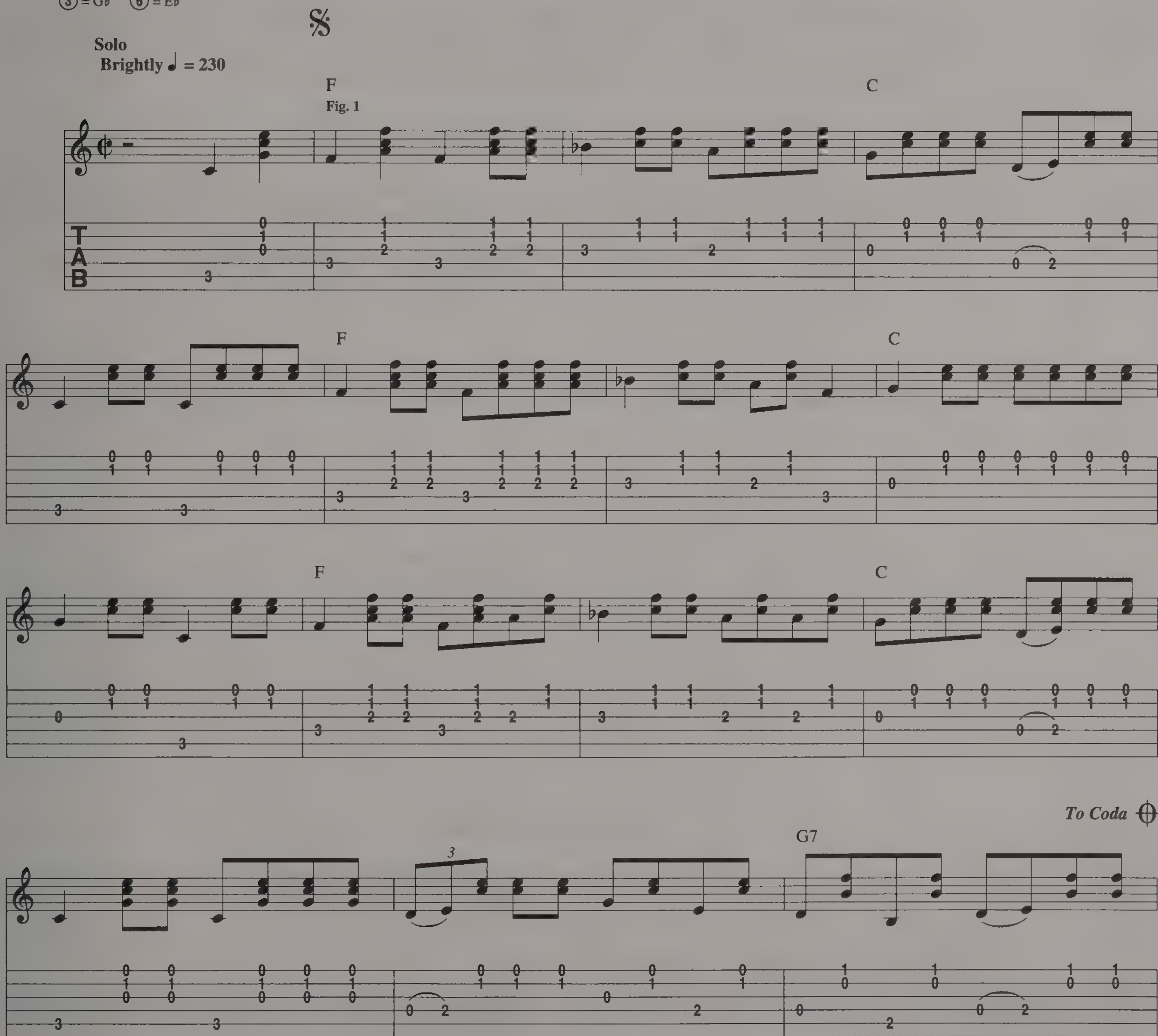
John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man

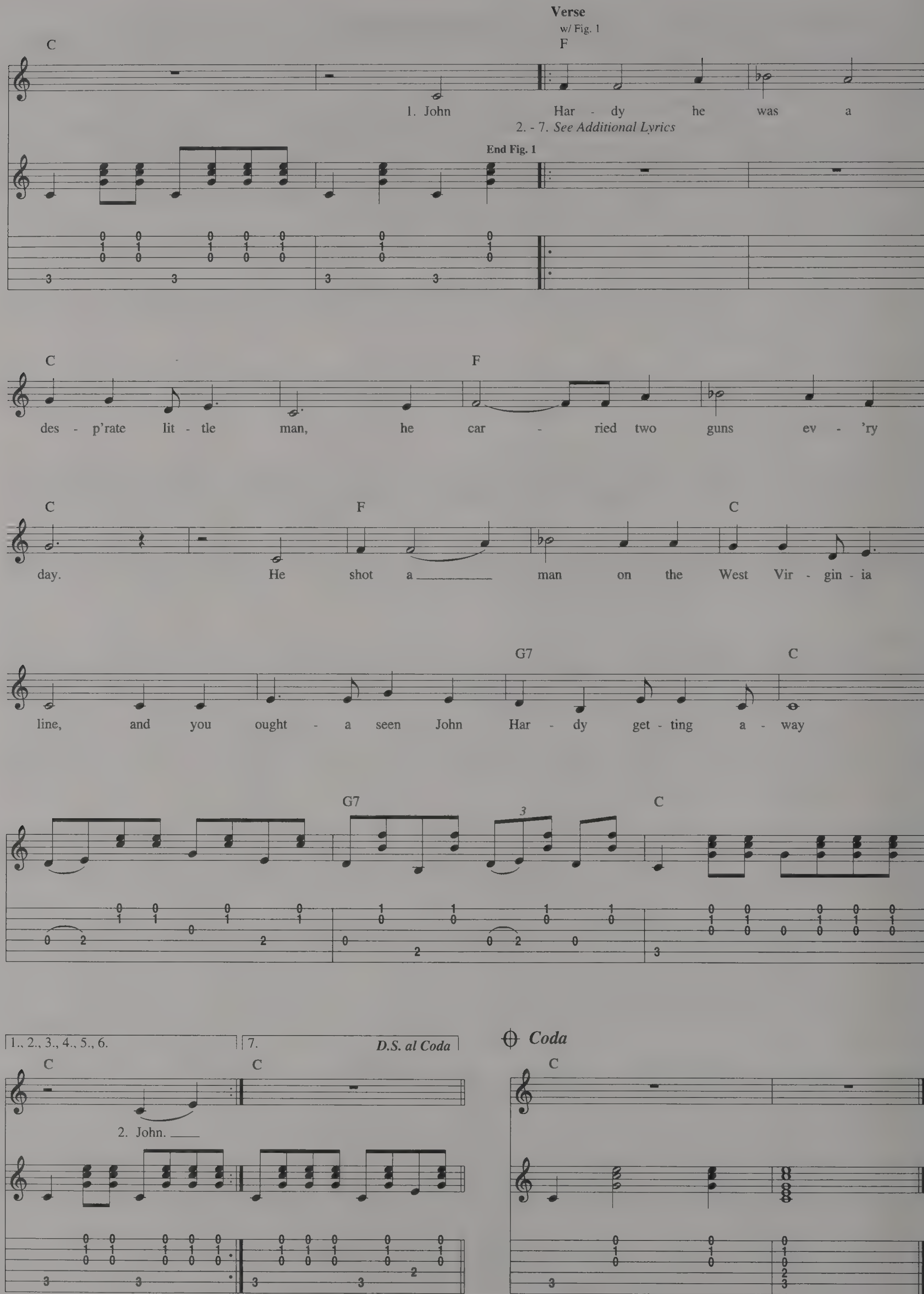
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Maybelle Carter said she knew "John Hardy" all her life before recording it at the 1928 Camden sessions. It tells the story of a West Virginia outlaw who was hanged in 1894 for killing a man over a twenty-five cent gambling debt. Keystone Bridge, referred to in the lyric, is a town in McDowell County, West Virginia near where Hardy worked and committed his crime. The song has been played as an instrumental by Bill Monroe and other bluegrassers, and has been recorded by Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Norman Blake, Bela Fleck, Leadbelly, Manfred Mann, Tony Rice, George Thorogood and others.

During the vocals of "John Hardy," Maybelle continued to play her melodic solo, instead of picking her usual chords and bass runs.

Tuning
① = E♭ ④ = D♭
② = B♭ ⑤ = A♭
③ = G♭ ⑥ = E♭




Verse
w/ Fig. 1
C
F
1. John Hardy he was a
2. - 7. See Additional Lyrics
End Fig. 1
C F
desp'rate little man, he carried two guns ev'ry
C F C
day. He shot a man on the West Virginia
G7 C
line, and you ought-a seen John Hardy getting away
G7 C
1., 2., 3., 4., 5., 6.
7.
D.S. al Coda
Coda
C
C
C
2. John.

Additional Lyrics

2. John Hardy, he got to the East Stone Bridge, he thought that he would be free,
   as up stepped a man and took him by his arm, says "Johnny, walk along with me."
3. He sent for his poppy and his mommy too, to come and go his bail,
   but money won't go a murdering case, and they locked John Hardy back in jail.
4. John Hardy he had a pretty little girl, the dress that she wore was blue,
   as she came skipping through the old jail hall saying "Poppy I've been true to you."
5. John Hardy, he had another little girl, the dress that she wore was red,
   She followed John Hardy to his hanging ground, saying "Poppy, I would rather be dead."
6. I've been to the East and I've been to the West, I've been this wide world around,
   I've been to the river and I been baptized, and it's now I'm on my hanging ground.
7. John Hardy walked out on his scaffold high with his loving little wife by his side,
   and the last word she heard poor John all say, "I'll meet you in that sweet bye and bye."

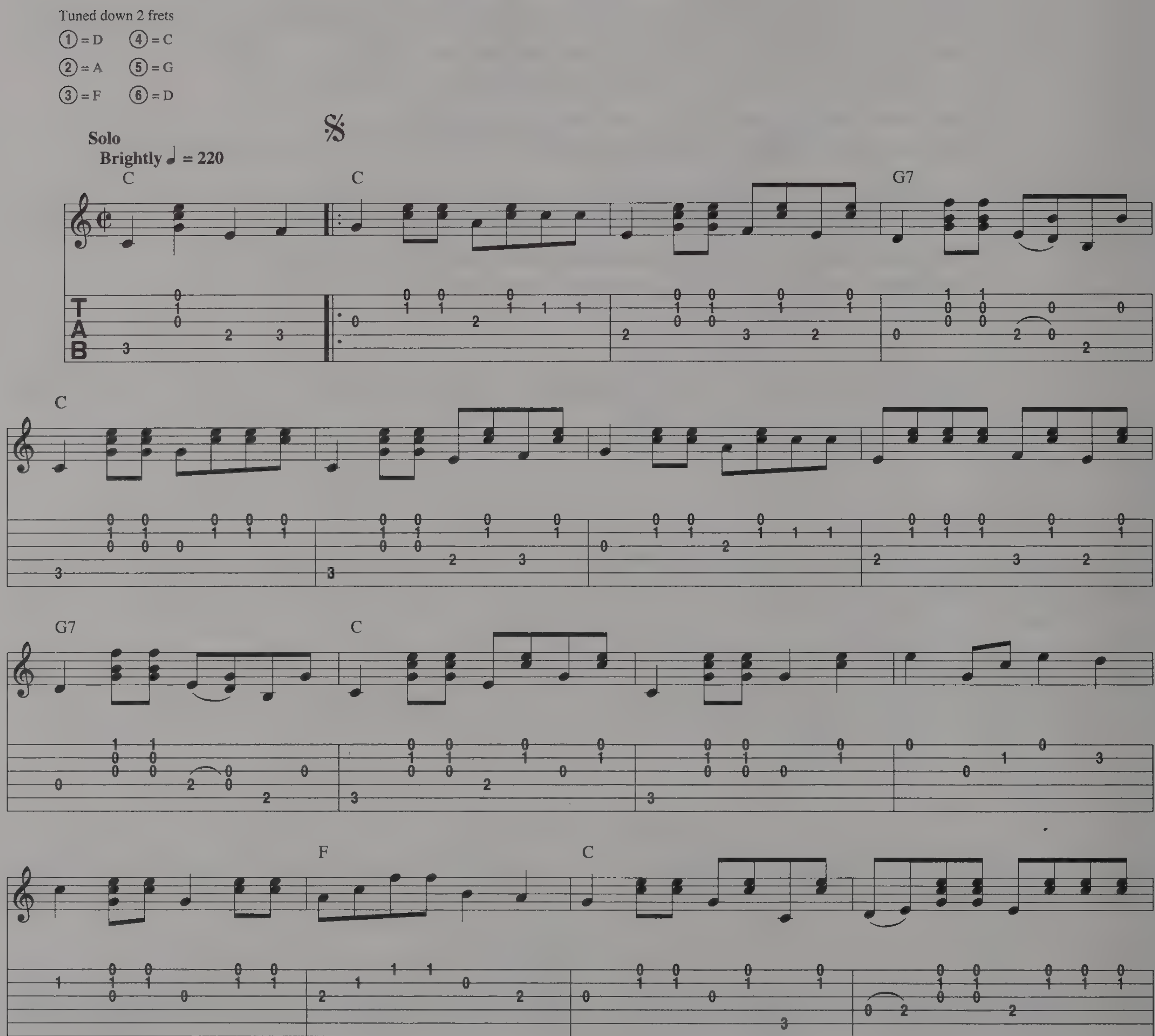
Wildwood Flower

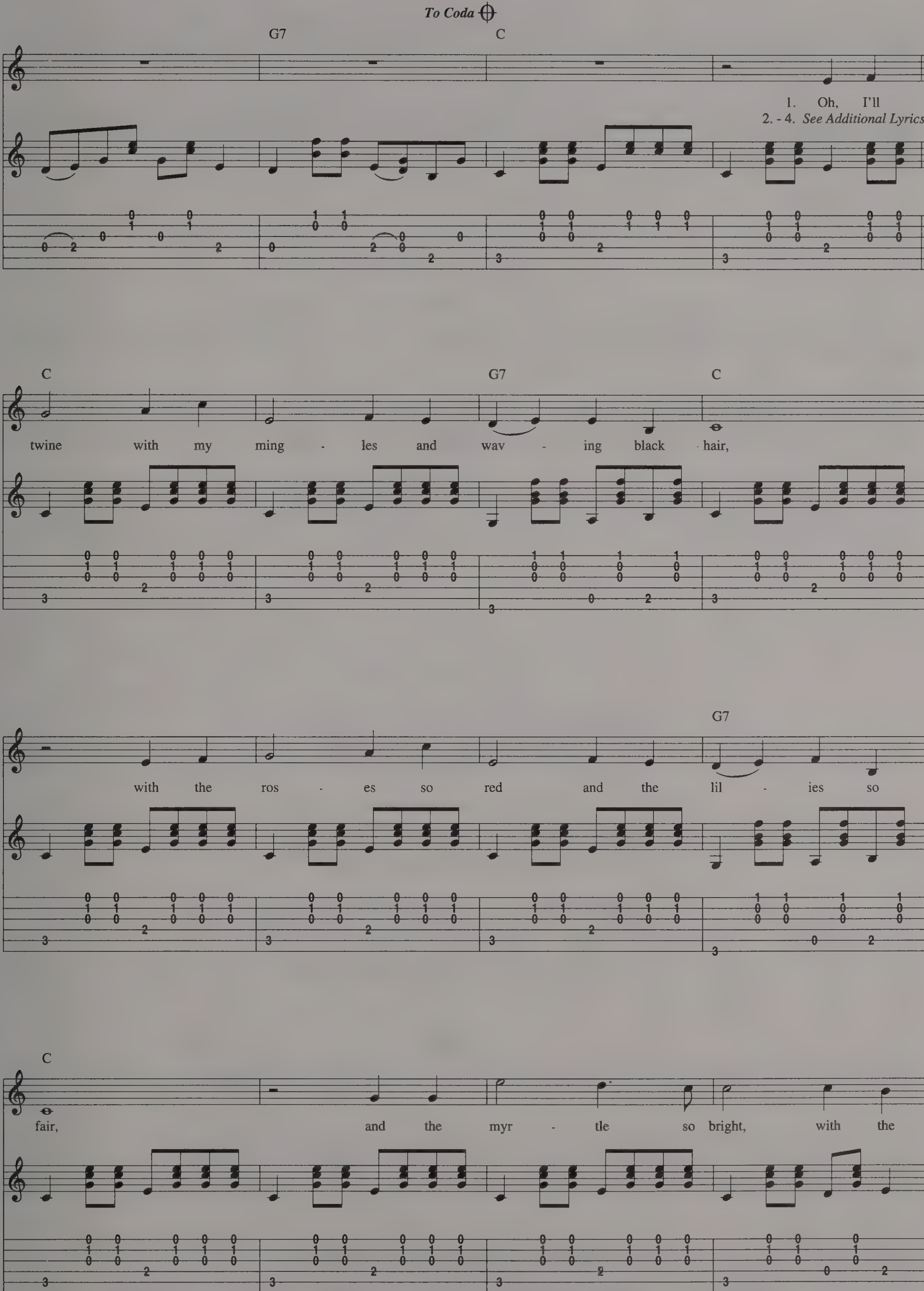
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Learning to play Maybelle Carter's solo on "Wildwood Flower" has become a rite of passage for country guitarists. The Carter Family recorded it at the 1928 Camden sessions. The tune was inspired by two popular mid-nineteenth century parlor songs Maybelle learned from her grandma. Lyrics are often changed when a song enters oral tradition, and this could explain some of the oddities of "Wildwood Flower"; "ringlets" became "mingles," and "the pale and the leader" probably started out as "pale amaryllis."

"Wildwood Flower" eventually sold a million 78s* for the Carters, and it has been recorded by Chet Atkins, Boots Randolph, Ralph Stanley, 10,000 Maniacs, Merle Travis, David Grisman, Emmylou Harris, Lonnie Mack, cajun singer D.L. Menard, the New Lost City Ramblers, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Hank Thompson, and the eclectic list goes on.

*From the 1920s to the1950s, music was released on 78 rpm records. These thick, breakable discs had a song on each side, and it had to be under three minutes in length.




To Coda
G7
C
1. Oh, I'll
2. - 4. See Additional Lyrics
C
G7
C
twine with my ming - les and wav - ing black hair,
G7
with the ros - es so red and the lil - ies so
C
fair, and the myr - tle so bright, with the



Additional Lyrics

2. I will dance, I will sing and my life shall be gay.
   I will charm ev'ry heart, in his crown I will sway.
   When I woke from dreaming, my idols was clay.
   All portions of love had all flown away.

3. Oh, he taught me to love him and promised to love,
   and to cherish me over all others above.
   How my heart is now wond'ring, no misery can tell.
   He's left me no warning, no words of farewell.

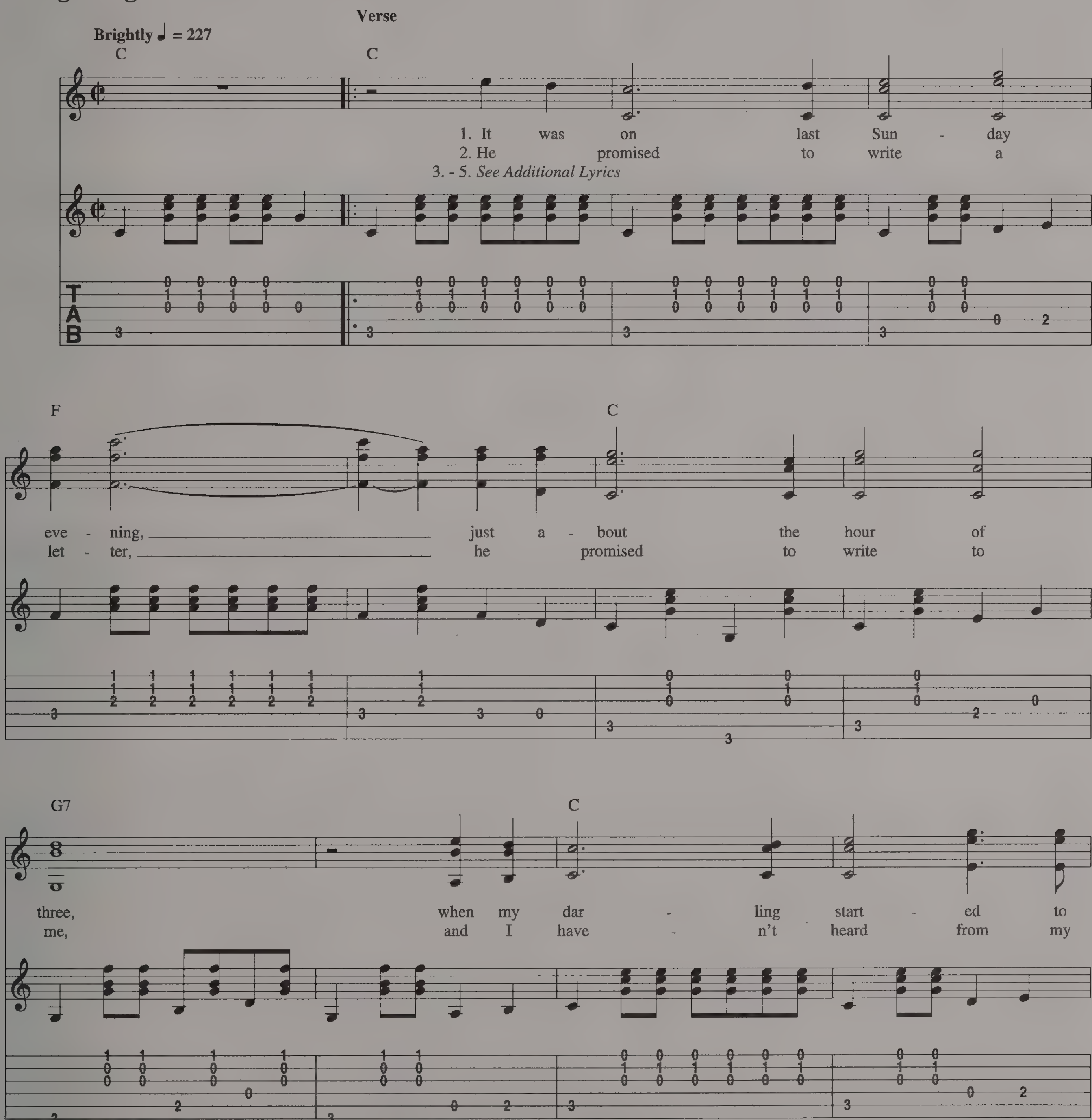
4. Oh, he taught me to love him and called me his flower
   that's blooming to cheer him through life's dreary hour.
   Oh, I long to see him and regret the dark hour
   he's won and neglected this pale wildwood flower.

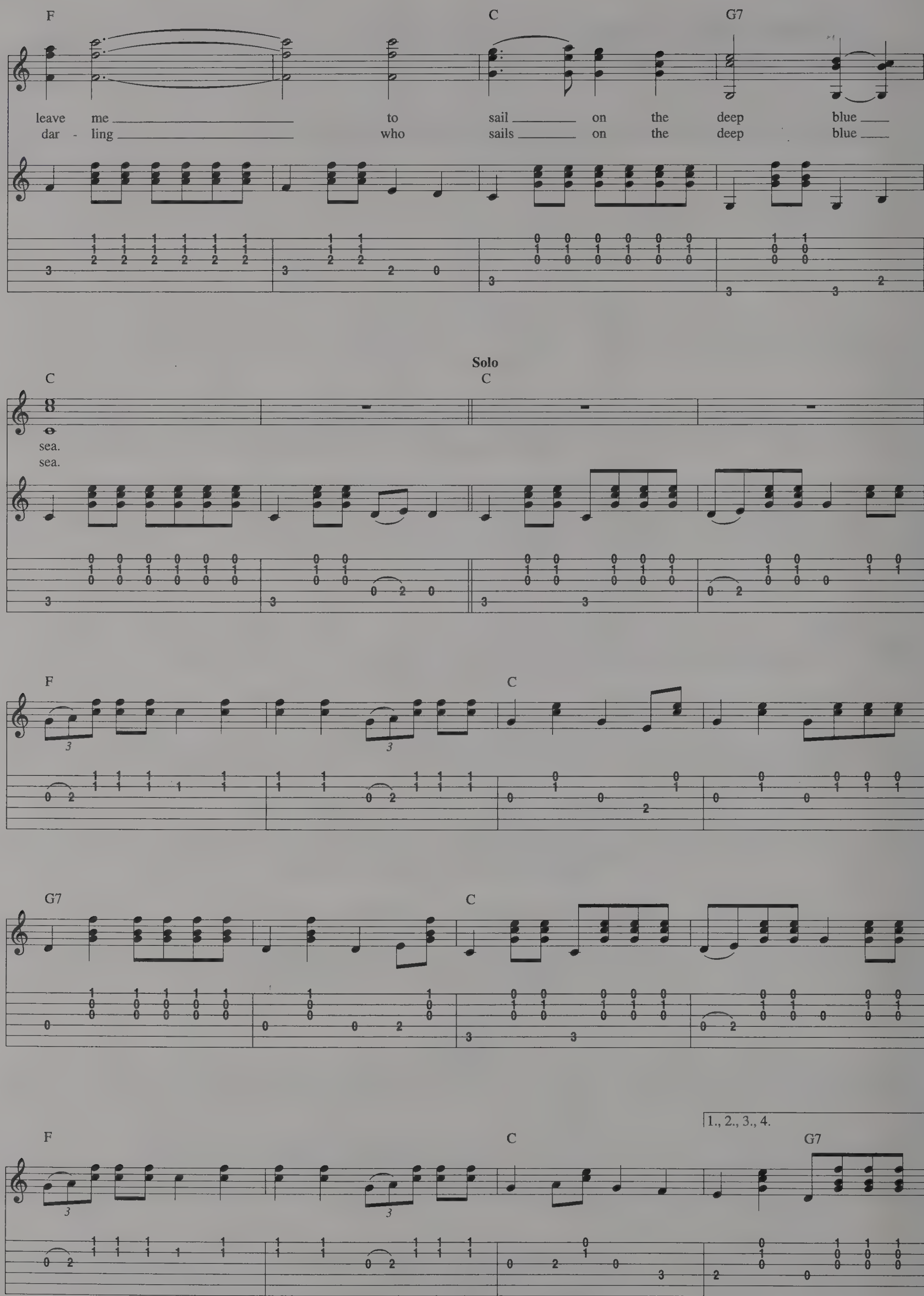
I Have No One to Love Me

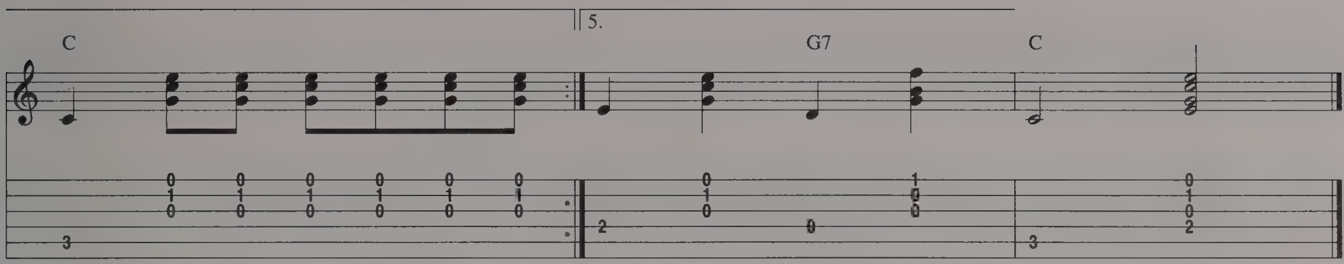
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Many old songs tell a story similar to "I Have No One to Love Me," which the Carters recorded at the first Camden sessions, including "Pinery Boy," "Captain Tell Me True" and "The Sailor Boy."

Tuned down 1 fret
① = E♭ ④ = D♭
② = B♭ ⑤ = A♭
③ = G♭ ⑥ = E♭




F
C
G7
leave me to sail on the deep blue
dar - ling who sails on the deep blue
C
Solo
C
sea.
sea.
F
C
G7
C
F
C
1., 2., 3., 4.
G7



Additional Lyrics

3. My mother is dead and buried, my papa's forsaken me,
and I have no one to love me but the sailor on the deep blue sea.

4. Oh, Captain, can you tell me, can you tell me where he may be?
Oh yes, my little maiden, he is drownded in the deep blue sea.

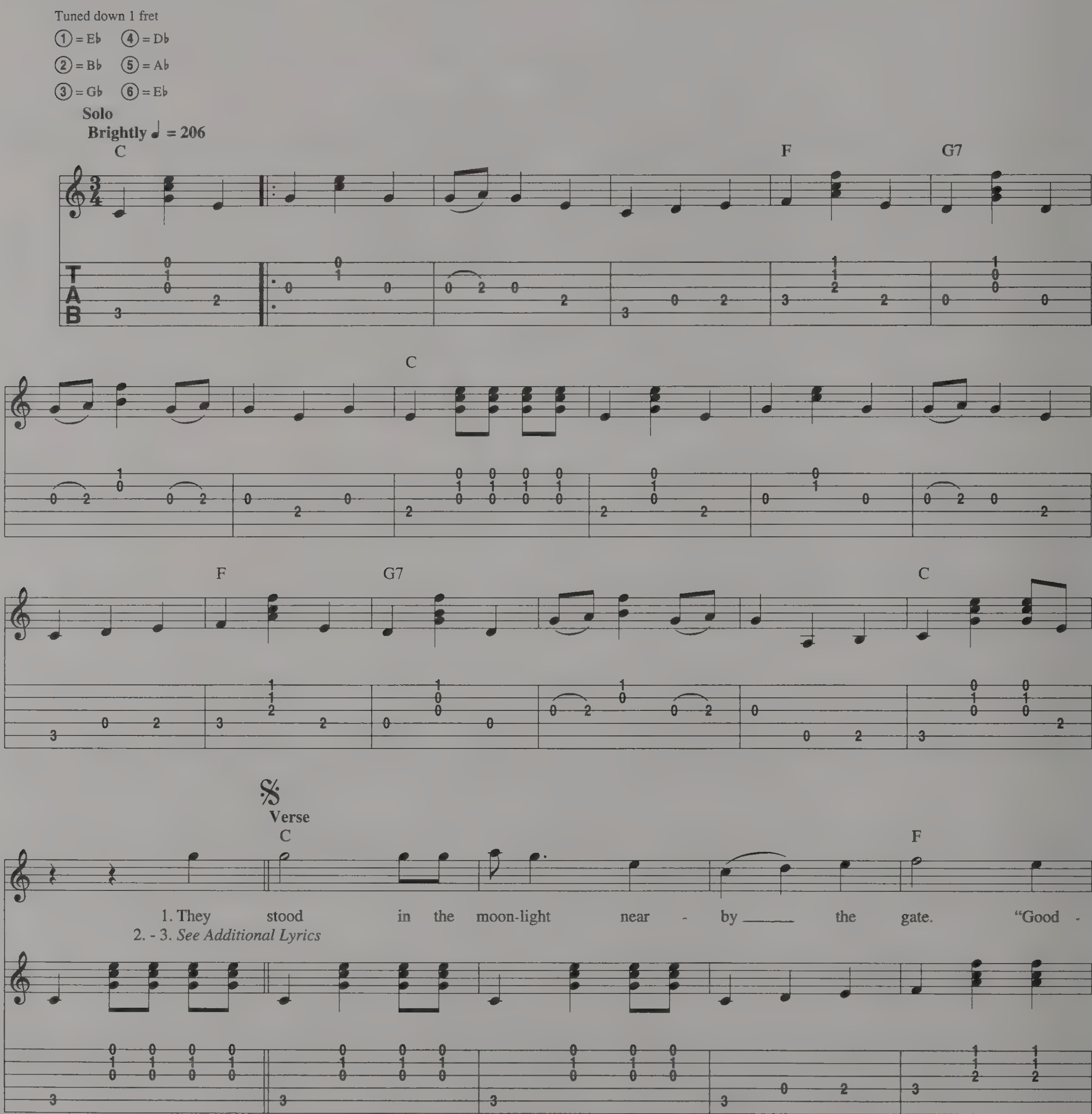
5. Farewell to friends and relations, it's the last you'll see of me.
I'm going to end my troubles by drowning in the deep blue sea.

Forsaken Love

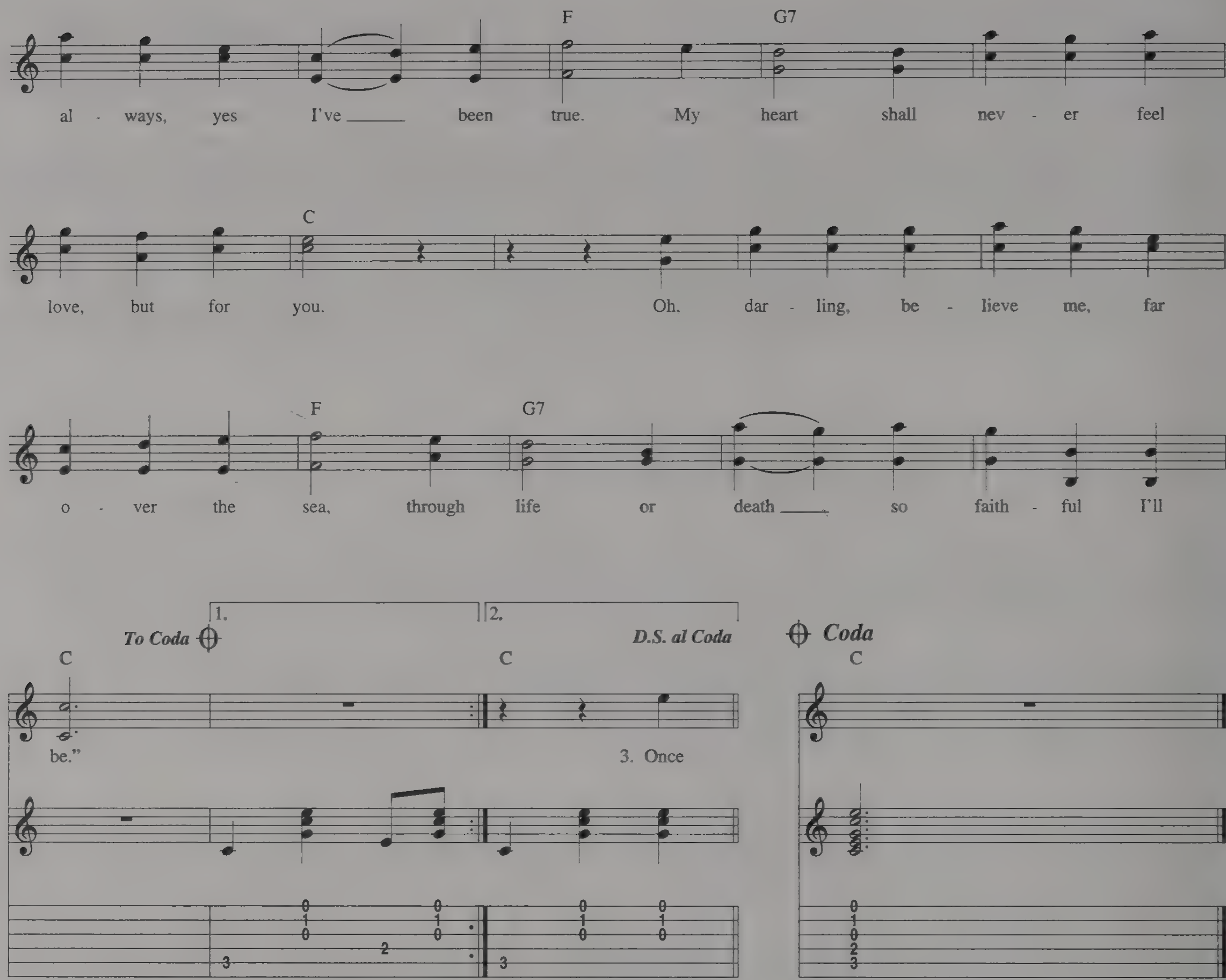
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Recorded the second day of the first Camden sessions, "Forsaken Love" eventually became one of the the Carters' biggest records, with over 120,000 units sold in an era when 20,000 units represented success. Maybelle said it was "just another old song." "Forsaken Love" was the Carters' first release on Victor's Old Familiar Tunes and Melodies series, which had just been created to feature folk music. "Wildwood Flower" was its B side.*

*During the era of 78 rpm and subsequently 45 rpm recordings, which lasted until the late 1950s and the late 1970s respectively, music was released on "singles," two-sided discs with one song per side. Recording companies indicated which song they preferred for radio air-play (the song they thought had more commercial potential) by labeling the sides "A" and "B."




G7
C
bye, my dar - ling, I know ___ you'll wait." She ceased her
F
G7
weep - ing and smiled ___ through her tears, say - ing "I've been true, love, through
Gtr. continues simile
C
these ___ long years." For on the mor - row, at the break ___ of
F
G7
C
day, he was ___ to jour - ney far, far a - way. He
F
G7
held her clos - er, his prom - ised bride, and to her
Chorus
C
C
ques - tion these words ___ re - plied: "I've loved you



Additional Lyrics

2. One year passed by, he's coming home,
his pilgrimage over, no longer to roam.
And smiling he thinks of her shining eye.
It's shining with welcoming glad surprise.

A dainty letter he takes from his breast,
to which he extends his lips were pressed.
And reading once more by the warming light
these words he had spoken to her that night.

Chorus

3. Once more he seeks the old garden gate,
but he arrives alas, alas, it's too late.
The wedding is over, the knot is tied.
He finds his darling another's bride.

And later they found him there on the grass,
a pistol nearby did tell what had passed.
A crumpled letter that explains the deed,
and in the pale moonlight these words did read.

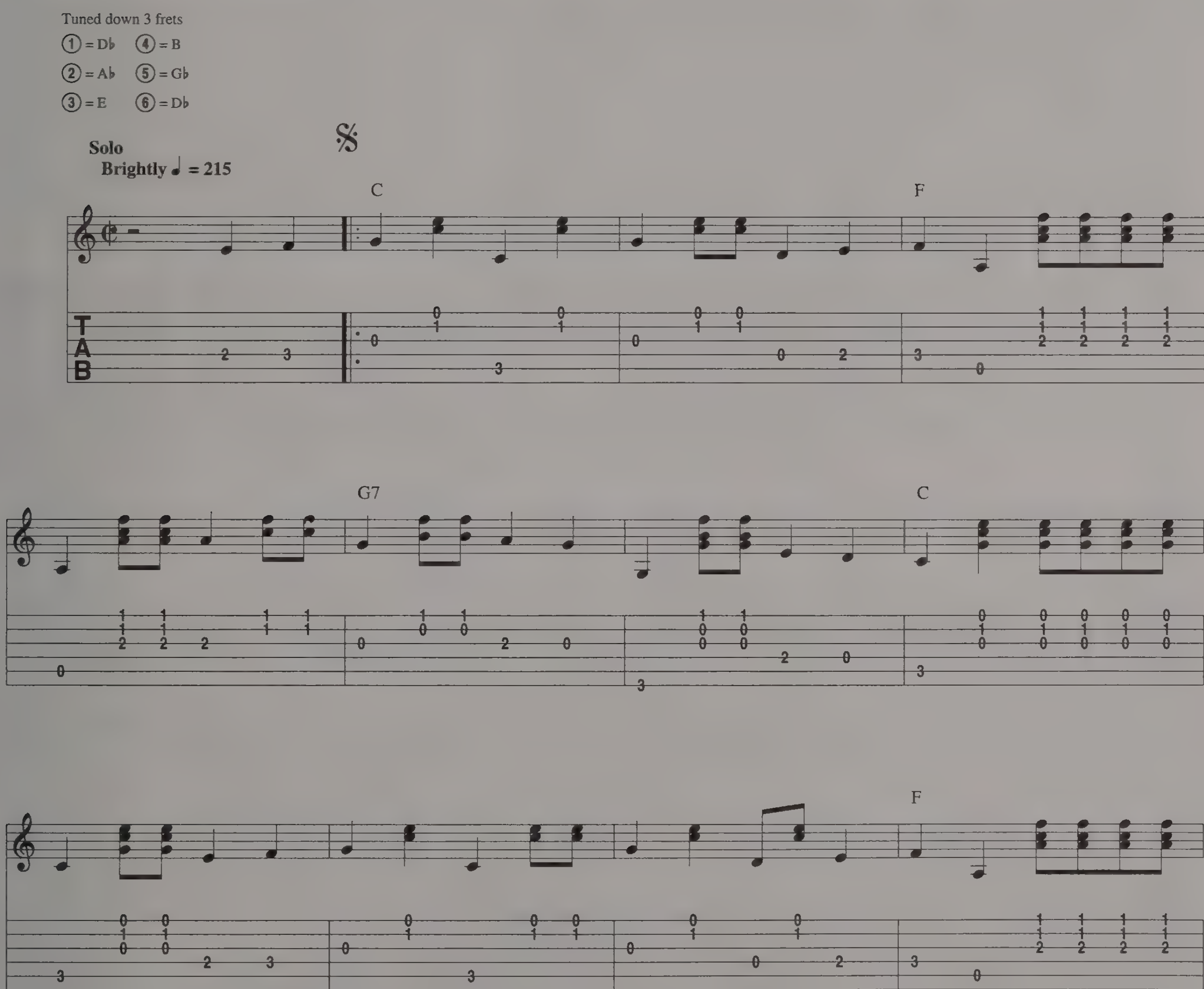
Chorus

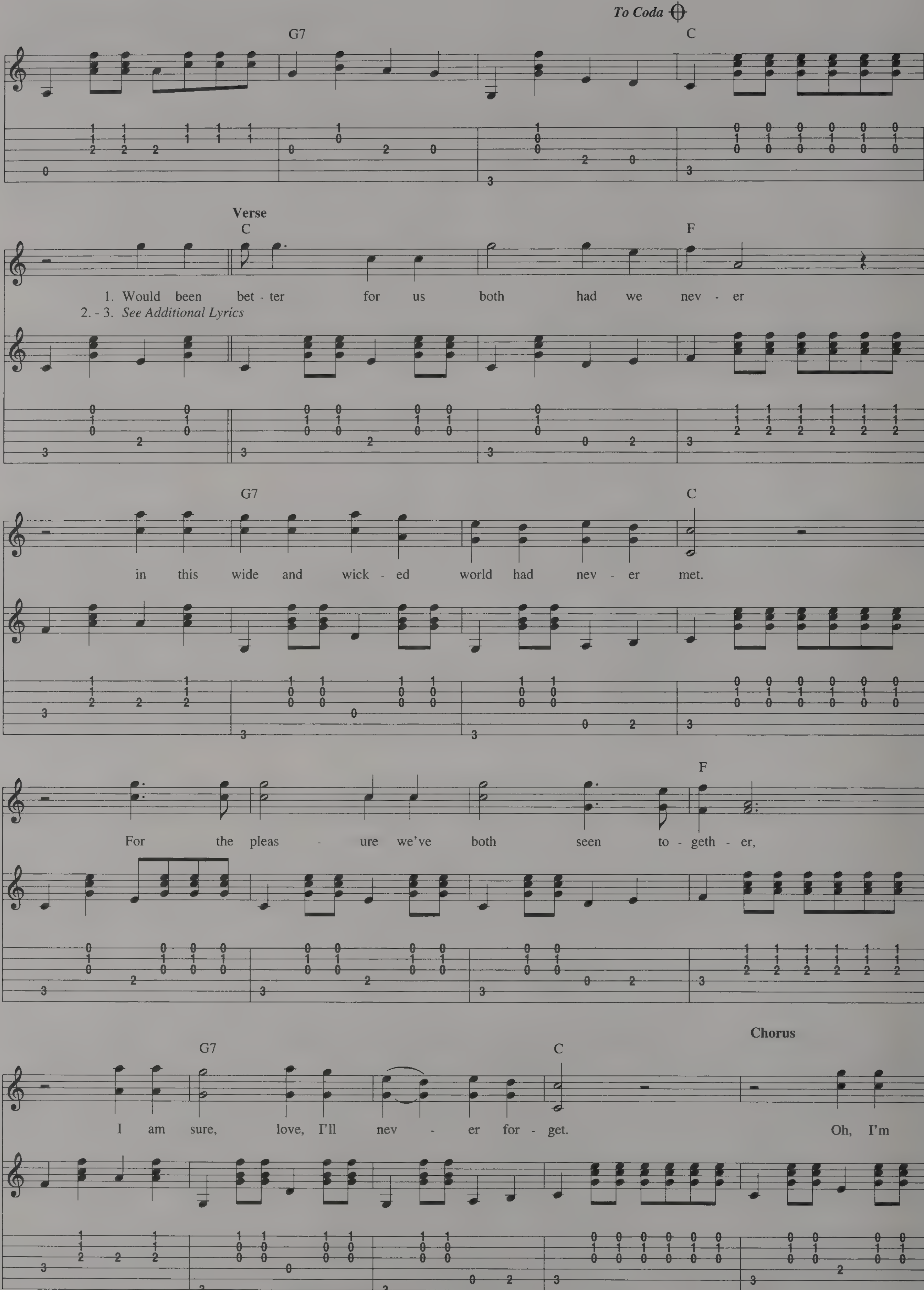
I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes

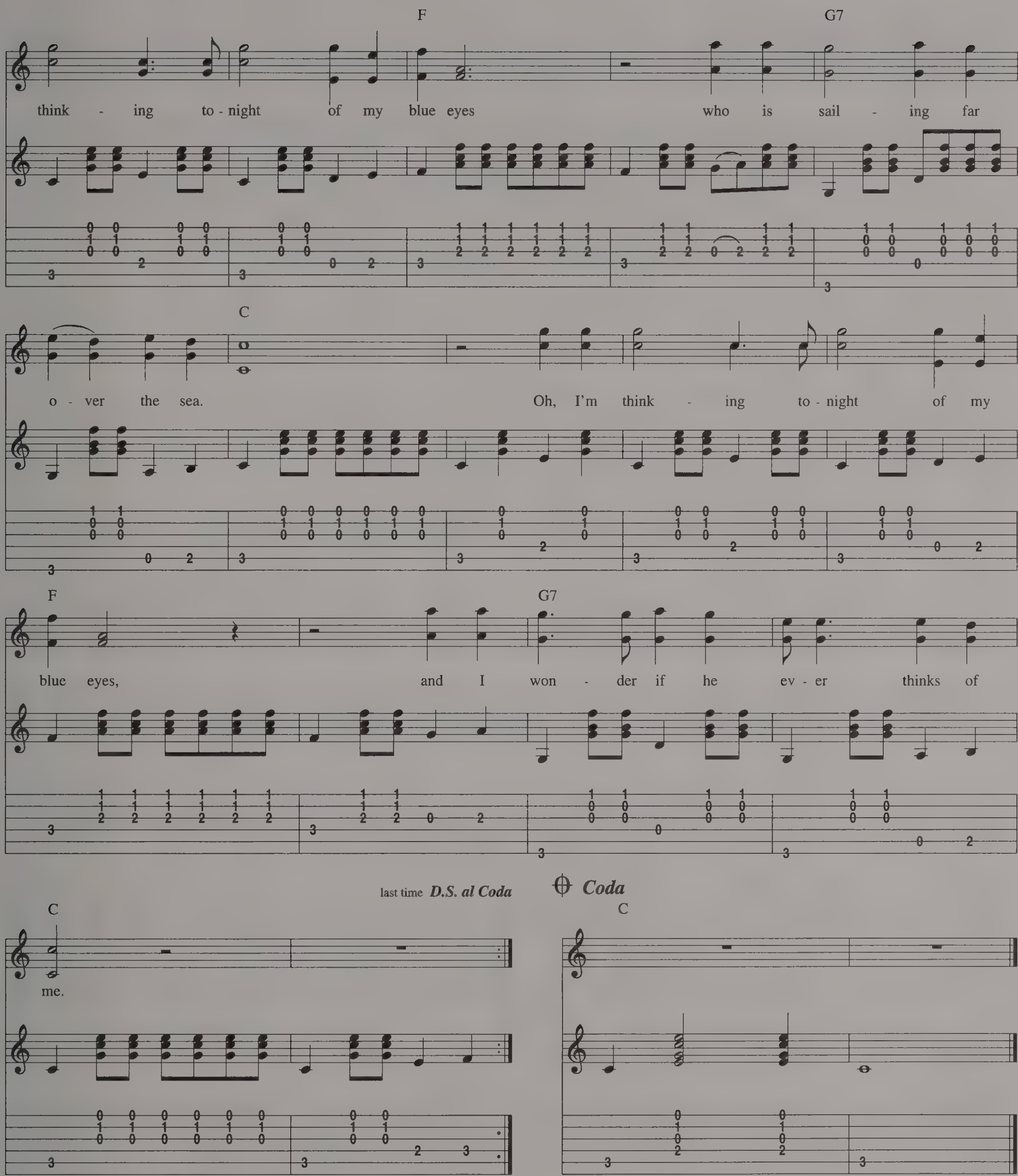
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

February 14, 1929, the Carter Family returned to Victor's Camden studios to record another dozen tunes in two days. Their records were selling well, and this time they took the train to New Jersey.

Sara and Maybelle said they had always known "Blue Eyes," and the Stoneman Family had recorded a similar tune. Gene Autry's recording of the Carter tune brought him one of his first hits, and the melody of "Blue Eyes" became the basis for many country standards, including one of Roy Acuff's signature tunes, "The Great Speckled Bird," Hank Thompson's "Wild Side of Life" and Kitty Wells' "answer" to Thompson's song, "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels."




To Coda
G7
C
Verse
C
F
1. Would been bet - ter for us both had we nev - er
2. - 3. See Additional Lyrics
G7
C
in this wide and wick - ed world had nev - er met.
F
For the pleas - ure we've both seen to - geth - er,
G7
C
Chorus
I am sure, love, I'll nev - er for - get.
Oh, I'm



Additional Lyrics

2. Oh, you told me once, dear, that you loved me,
you said that we never would part.
But a link in the chain that's been broken
leaves me with a sad and aching heart.

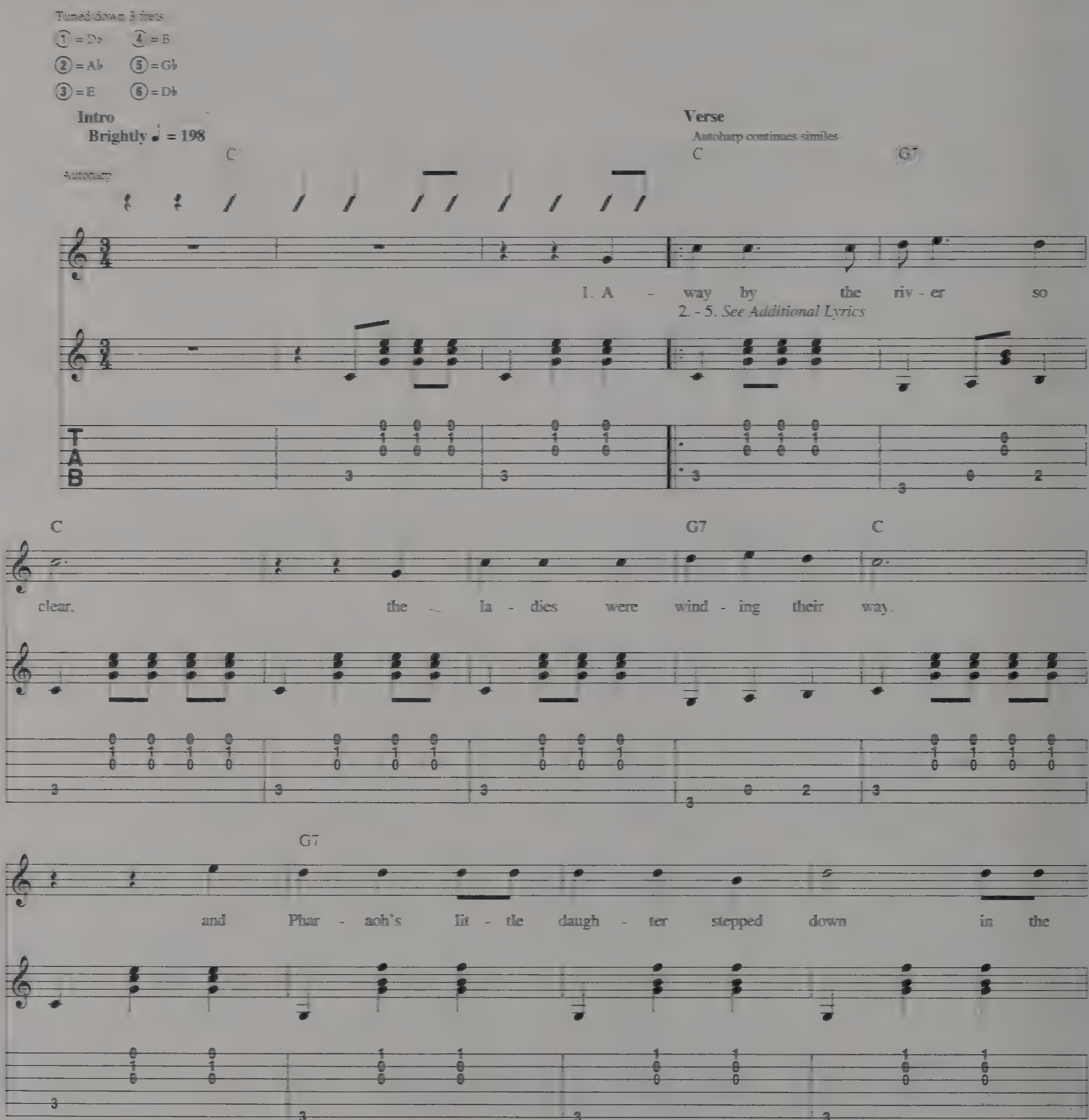
3. When the cold, cold grave shall enclose me,
will you come there and shed just one tear,
and say to the strangers around you,
a poor heart you have broken lies here?

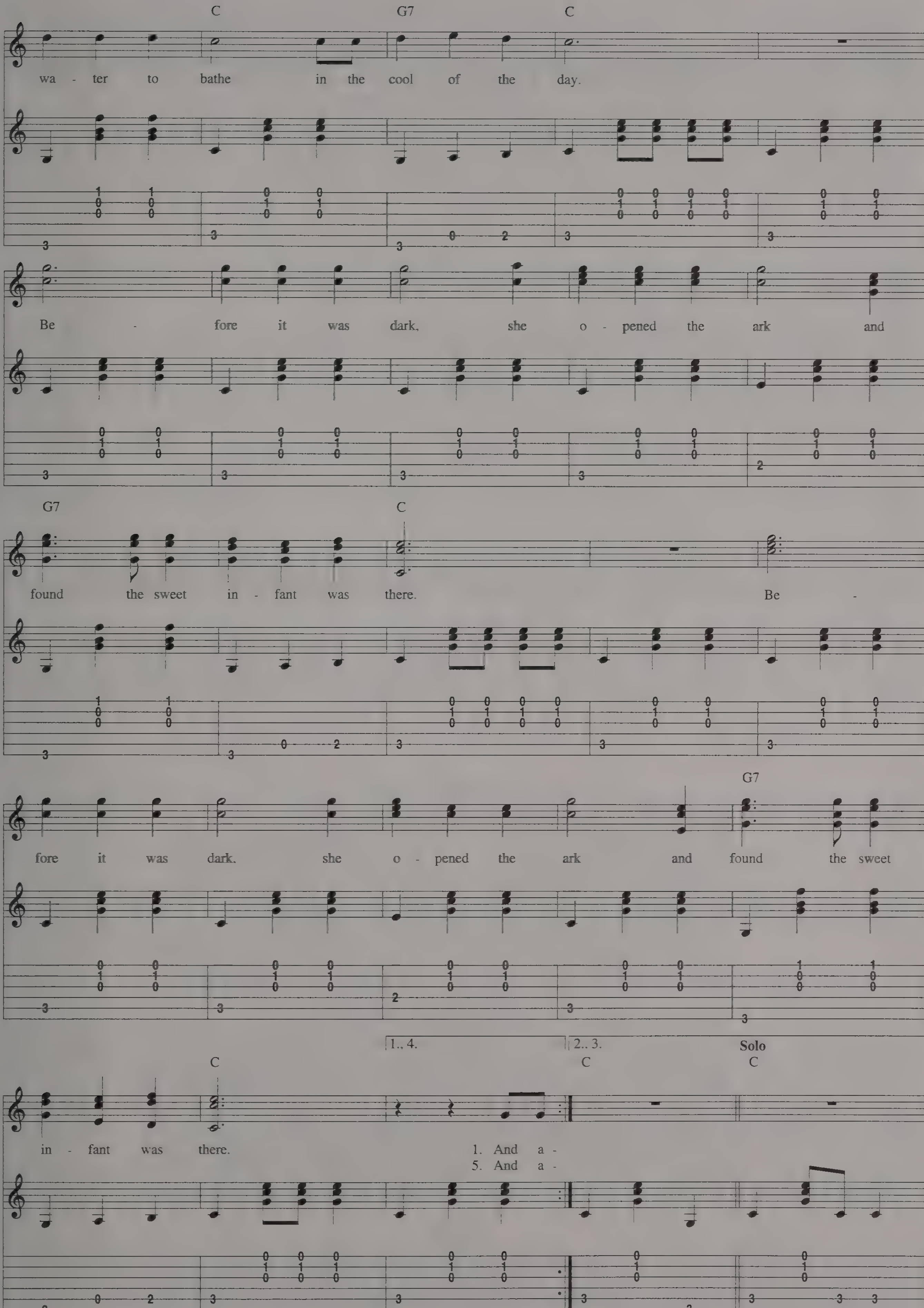
Little Moses

Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Sara, who sang "Little Moses" on the Carter's second Camden session, learned the tune from an older relative. Joan Baez, and Robin and Lucinda Williams have recorded it.

Sara played autoharp in B♭, which, on the old-style autoharps can only be done on a two-chord song: the instrument has a B♭ and F, but no E♭ (IV chord). Maybelle tuned down two frets to play in C, but because Sara was tuned a half-step low, or because of changes in pitch from so much remastering of the original recording, you have to tune your guitar *three* frets lower than usual to match Maybelle's guitar.




C G7 C
wa - ter to bathe in the cool of the day.
Be - fore it was dark, she o - pened the ark and
G7 C
found the sweet in - fant was there. Be -
G7
fore it was dark, she o - pened the ark and found the sweet
1., 4.
2., 3.
Solo
C C C
in - fant was there.
1. And a -
5. And a -



Additional Lyrics

2. And away by the waters so blue, the infant was lonely and sad.
   She took him in pity and thought him so pretty, and it made little Moses so glad.
   She called him her own, her beautiful son, and sent for a nurse that was near.
   She called him her own, her beautiful son, and sent for a nurse that was near.

3. And away by the river so clear, they carried the beautiful child.
   To his own tender mother, his sister and brother, little Moses looked happy and smiled.
   His mother so good done all that she good to rear him and teach him with care.
   His mother so good done all that she good to rear him and teach him with care.

4. And away by the sea that was red, little Moses, the servant of God,
   while in him confided, the sea was divided as upward he lifted his rod.
   The Jews safely crossed while Pharoah's host was drownded in the waters and lost.
   The Jews safely crossed while Pharoah's host was drownded in the waters and lost.

5. And away on the mountain so high, the last one that ever might see,
   while in him victorious, his hope was so glorious, he'd soon o'er the Jordan be free.
   When his labor did cease, he departed in peace and rested in the heavens above.
   When his labor did cease, he departed in peace and rested in the heavens above.

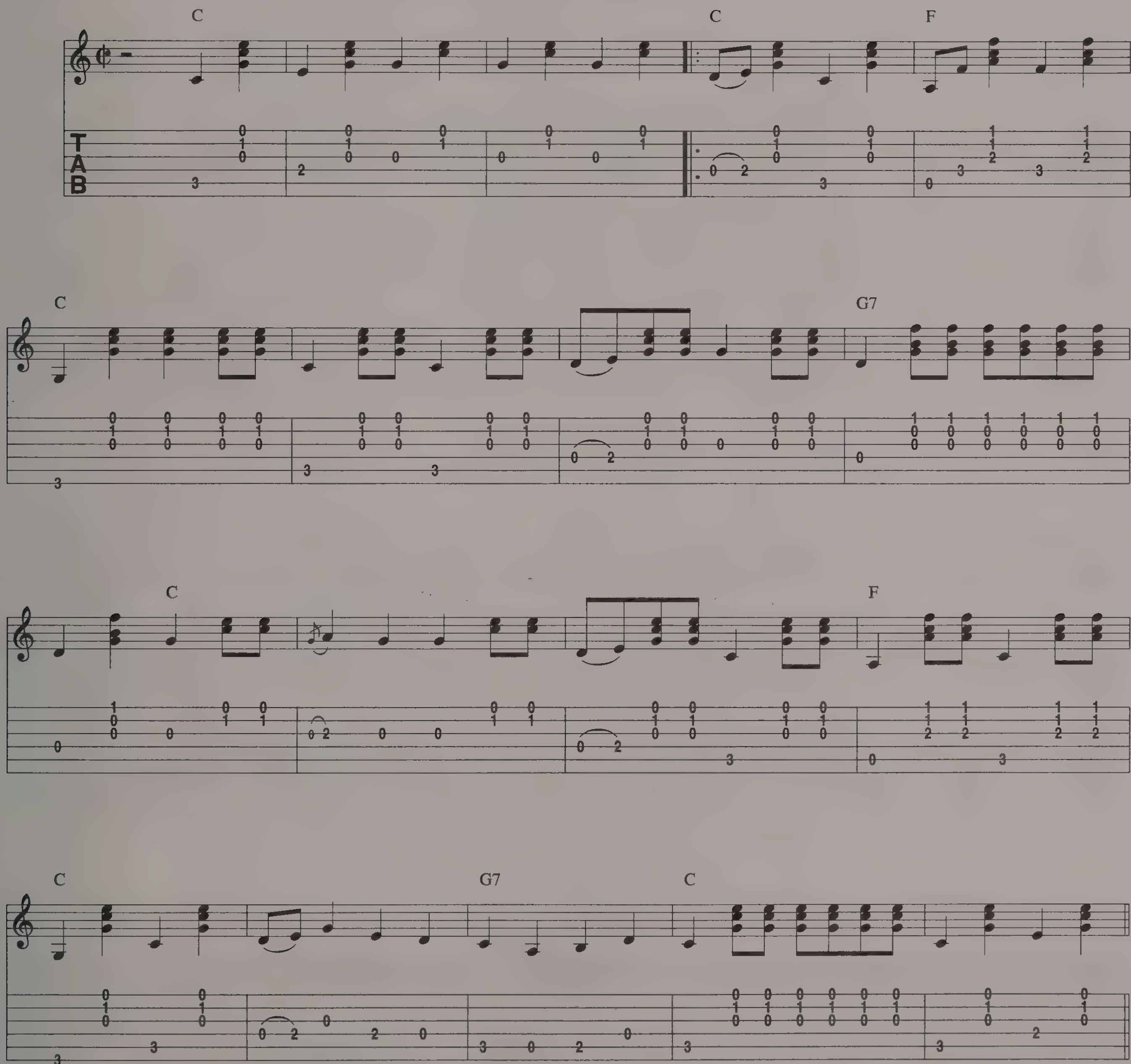
Lulu Walls

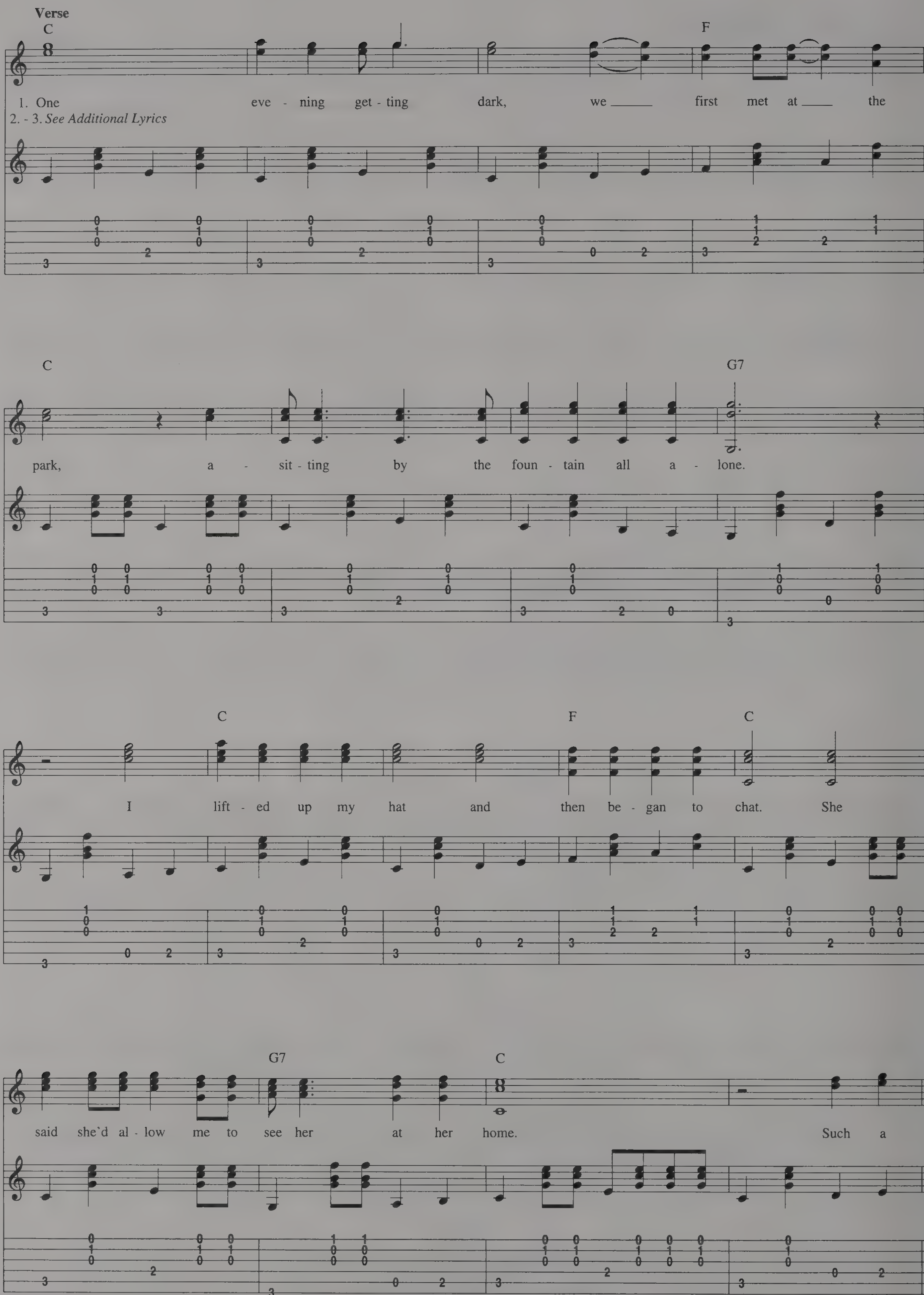
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

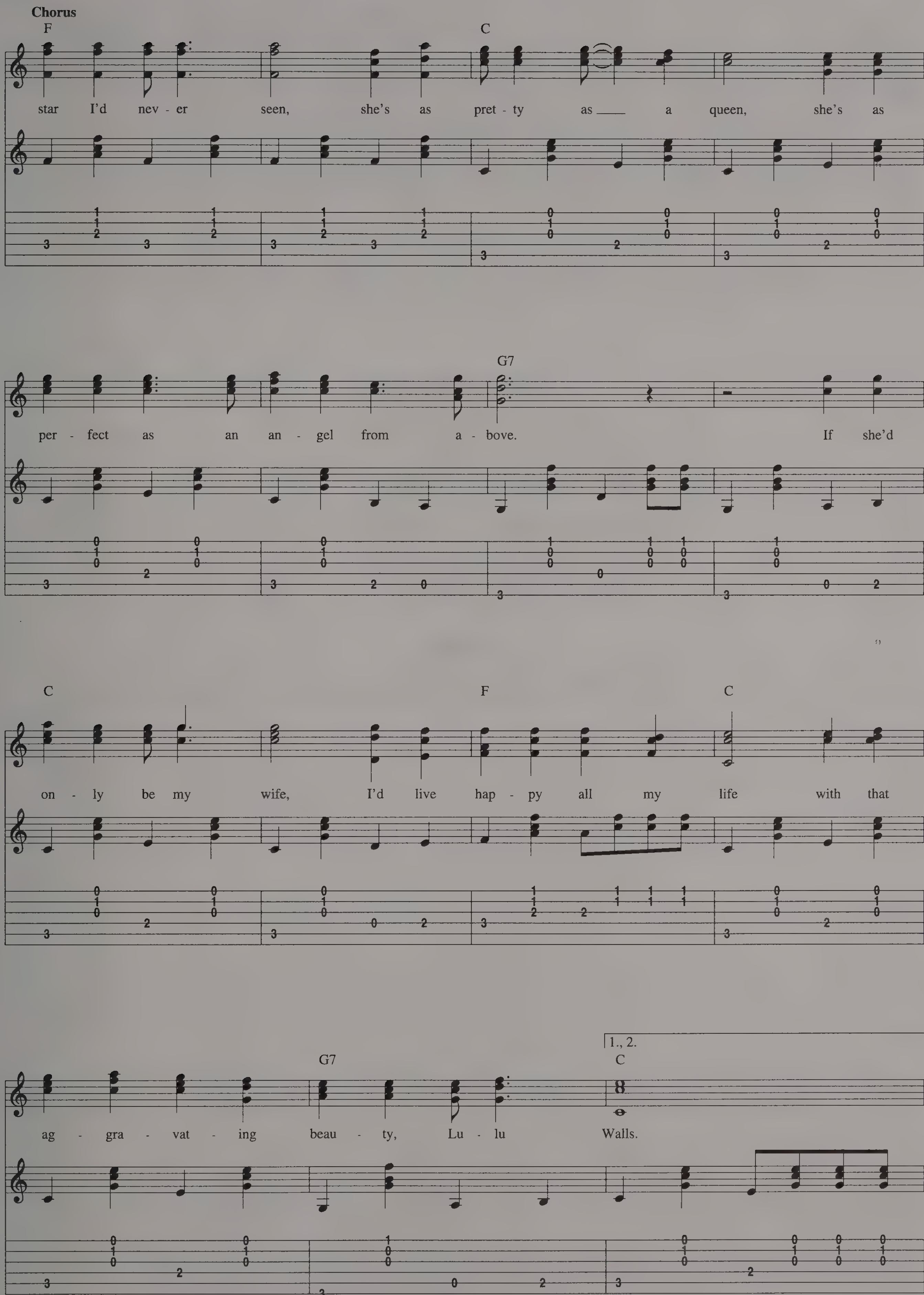
The Carters included "Lulu Walls" in their second Camden session. More recently, John Prine recorded it.

Tuned down 3 frets
(1) = D♭ (4) = B
(2) = A♭ (5) = G♭
(3) = E (6) = D♭

Solo
Brightly ♩ = 210




Verse
C
1. One eve - ning get - ting dark, we ___ first met at ___ the
2. - 3. See Additional Lyrics
F
C
park, a - sit - ting by the foun - tain all a - lone.
G7
C F C
I lift - ed up my hat and then be - gan to chat. She
G7 C
said she'd al - low me to see her at her home. Such a


Chorus
F
C
star I'd nev - er seen, she's as pret - ty as ___ a queen, she's as
G7
per - fect as an an - gel from a - bove. If she'd
C
F
C
on - ly be my wife, I'd live hap - py all my life with that
G7
1., 2.
C
ag - gra - vat - ing beau - ty, Lu - lu Walls.



Additional Lyrics

2. If she was only mine I would build a house so fine,
   and around it so many fences tall.
   It would make me jealous free that no one else but me
   could gaze upon that beauty, Lulu Walls.

3. One evening getting late, I met her at the gate.
   I asked her if she'd wed me in the Fall.
   She only turned away and nothing would she say,
   that aggravating beauty, Lulu Walls.

Foggy Mountain Top

Words and Music by A.P. Carter, Maybelle Carter and Sara Carter

Recorded the second day of the second Camden sessions, "Foggy Mountain Top" became one of the Carters' biggest hits, and it provided the most famous bluegrass group of all time, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, with their group name: The Foggy Mountain Boys. Sara said A.P. "kind of made it up but had heard a guy sing a few words of it." She didn't like the idea of yodeling in this or any tune, but "America's Blue Yodeler," Jimmie Rodgers, Victor's other best-selling artist, was doing so well with his yodeling records that Ralph Peer prevailed and Sara yodeled.

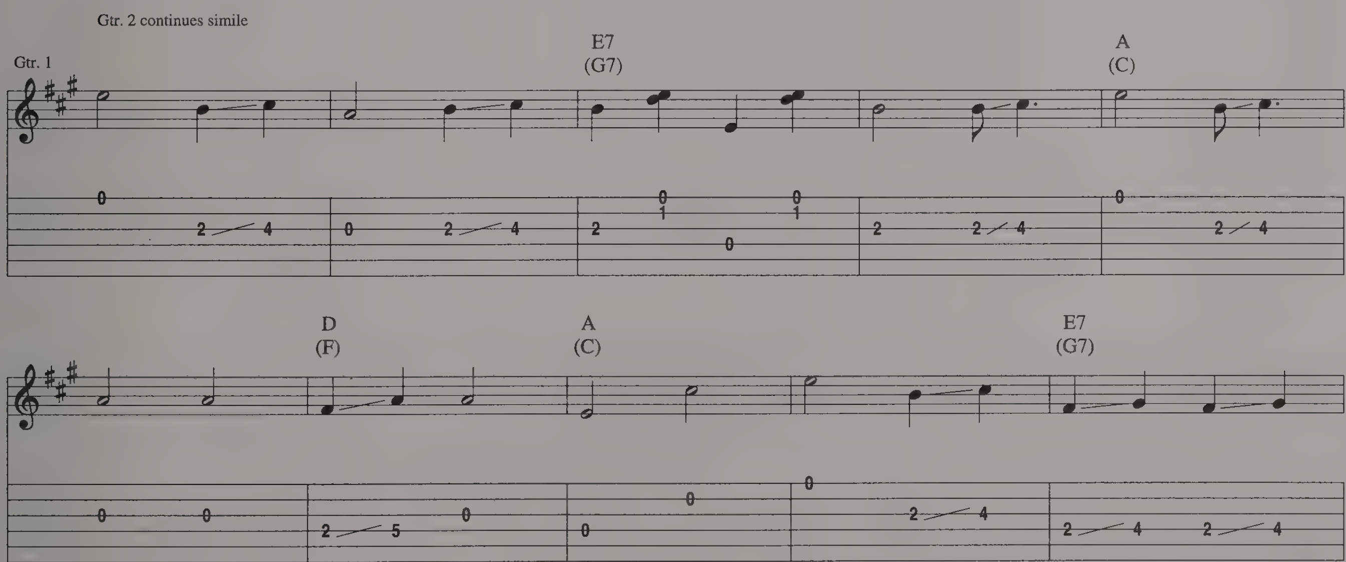
Once again Maybelle played melody on slide guitar throughout the tune, this time in A tuning. A little practice playing the A major scale, shown in the *Guitar Styles of the Carter Family* Introduction, makes it easier to duplicate her solo. Sara played backup guitar in standard tuning but three frets lower than usual.

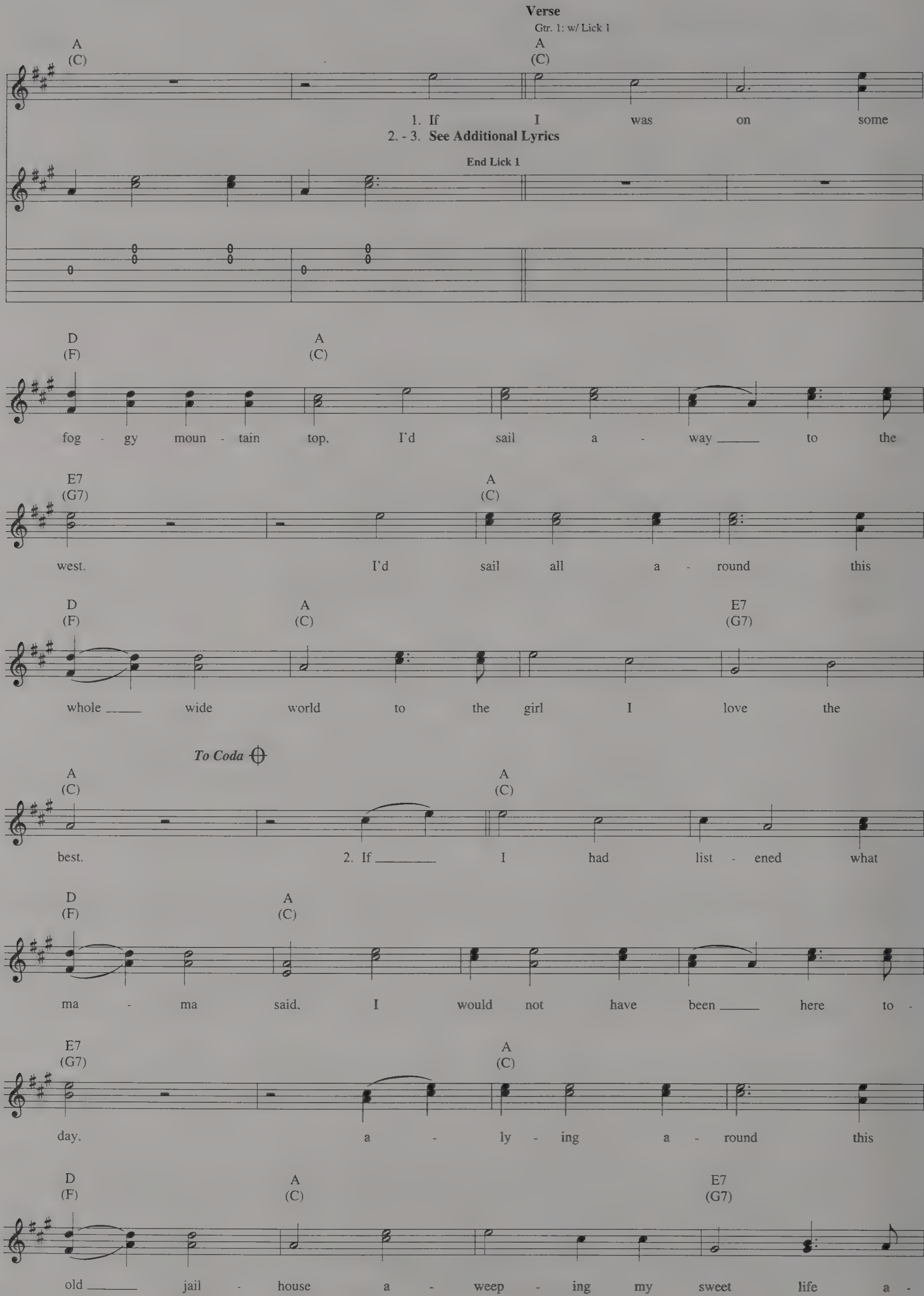
Gtr. 1: A tuning
① = E ④ = E
② = C♯ ⑤ = A
③ = A ⑥ = E

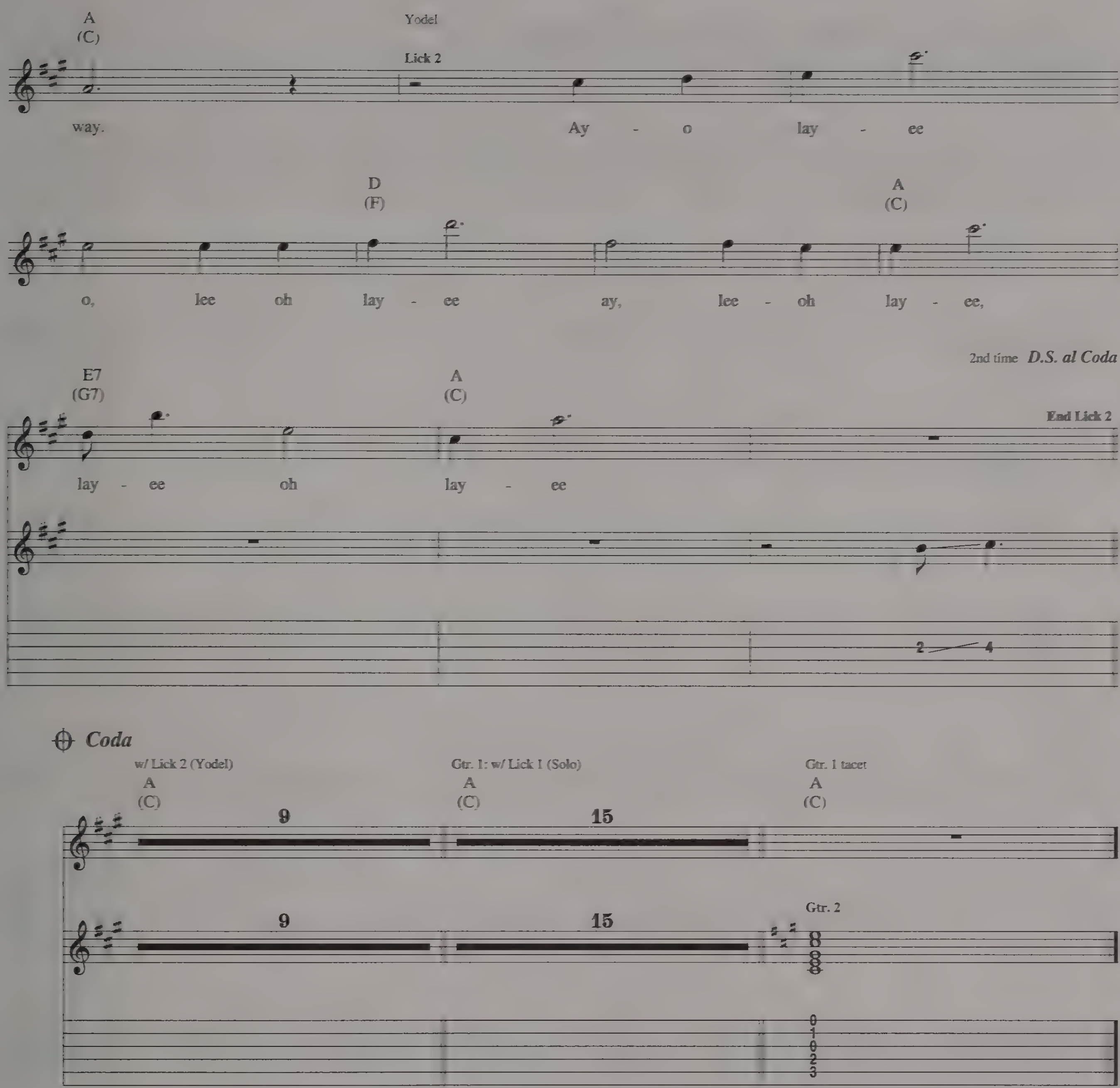
Gtr. 2: tuned down 3 frets
① = D♭ ④ = B
② = A♭ ⑤ = G♭
③ = E ⑥ = D♭



*Symbols in parentheses represent chord names respective to Gtr. 2. Symbols above reflect actual sounding chord.




Verse
Gtr. 1: w/ Lick 1
A (C)
1. If I was on some
2. - 3. See Additional Lyrics
End Lick 1
D (F) A (C)
fog - gy moun - tain top, I'd sail a - way ___ to the
E7 (G7) A (C)
west. I'd sail all a - round this
D (F) A (C) E7 (G7)
whole ___ wide world to the girl I love the
To Coda
A (C)
best. 2. If ___ I had list - ened what
D (F) A (C)
ma - ma said, I would not have been ___ here to -
E7 (G7) A (C)
day, a - ly - ing a - round this
D (F) A (C) E7 (G7)
old ___ jail - house a - weep - ing my sweet life a -



Additional Lyrics

2. Oh when you see that girl of mine, there is something you must tell her:
   She need not to fool no time away to court some other feller.
   She's caused me to weep, she caused me to mourn, she caused me to leave my home.
   Oh that lonesome pine and those good old times, I am on my way back home. (Yodel)

3. Oh when you go a-courting, I'll tell you how to do:
   Put off that long-tailed roustabout, put on your navy blue. (Yodel)

Engine One-Forty-Three

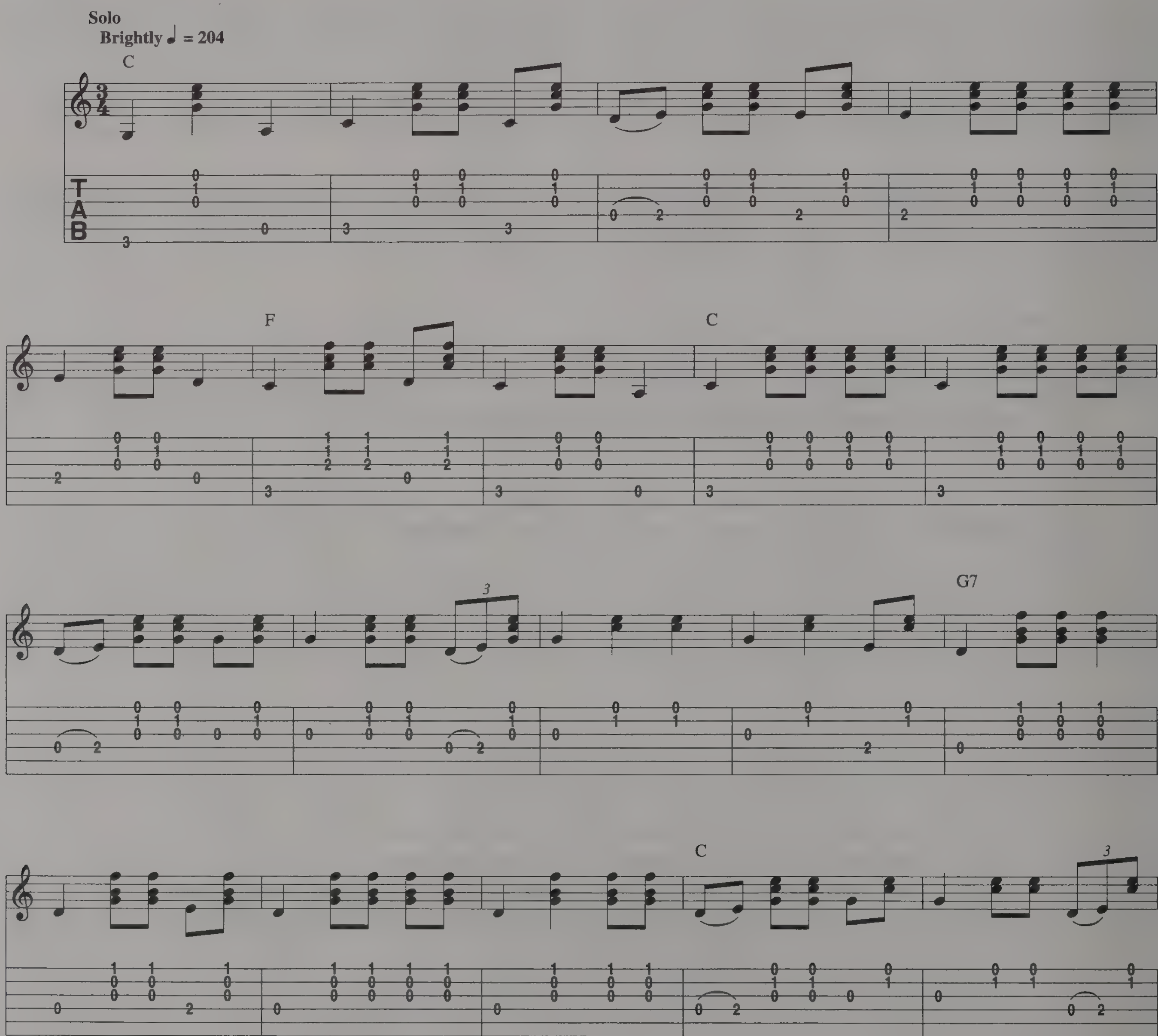
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

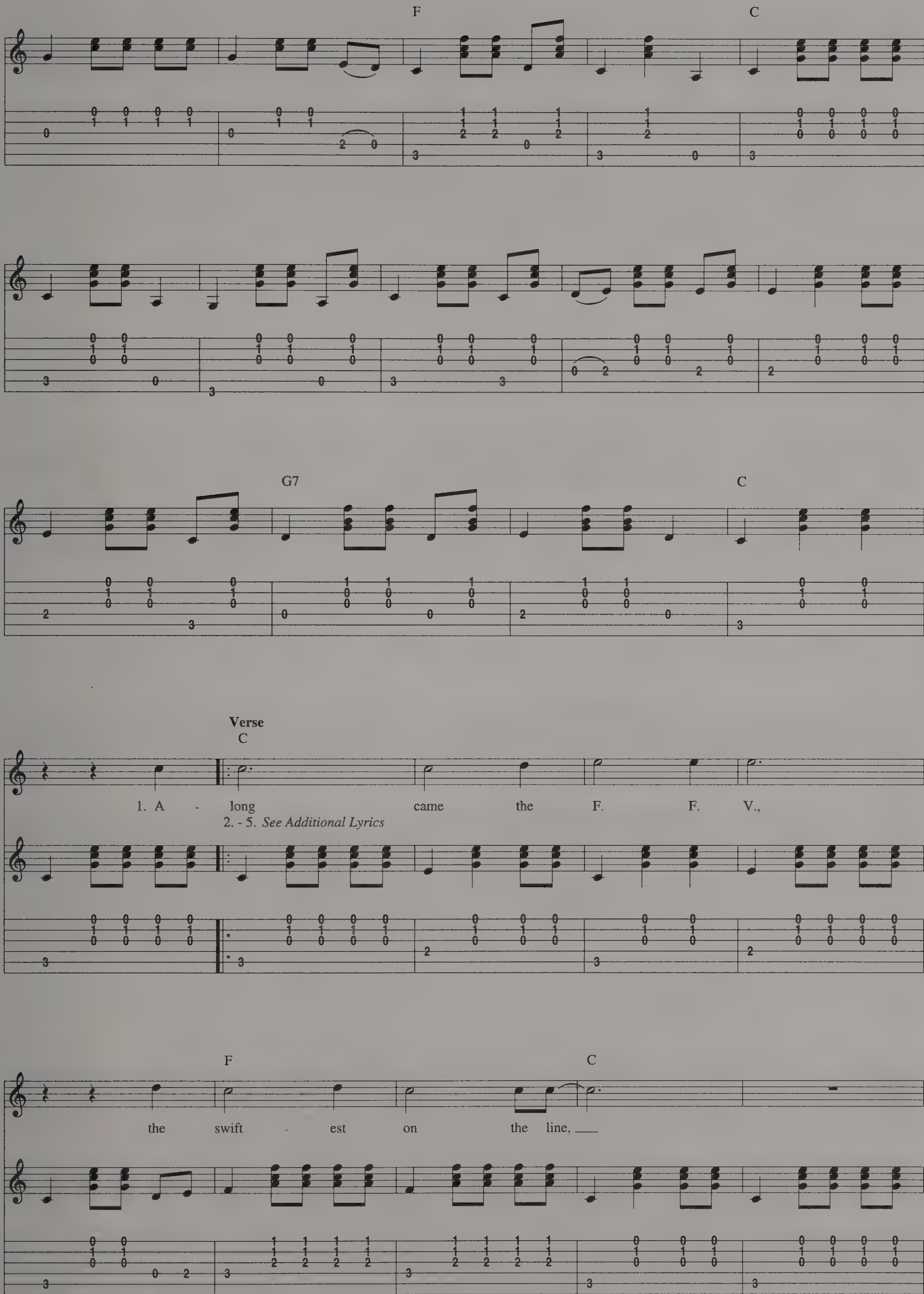
On October 23, 1890, engineer George Alley failed to stop his train from colliding with a rockslide on the track near Clifton Forge, Virginia. The event was immortalized in "Engine One-Forty-Three," a classic in the gruesome genre of train wreck songs. The luxury train was called the *Fast Flying Virginian,* though folklore has it that FFV stood for *Fast Flying Vestibule.*

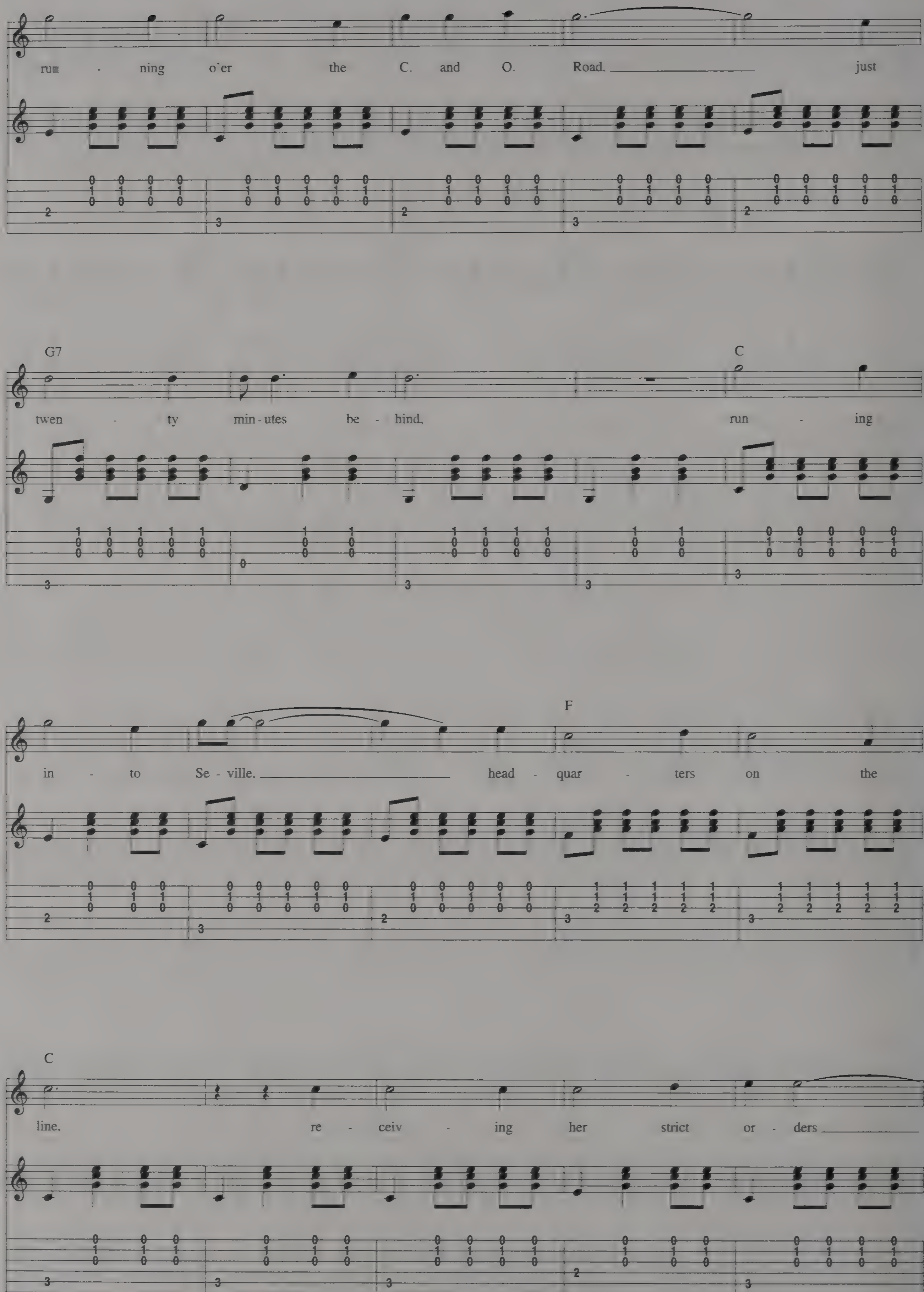
Sara had known the song as a child, and was singing it and playing autoharp in her aunt's parlor in 1914 when A.P. first met her. The Carters' version from their second Camden sessions sold 90,000 records.

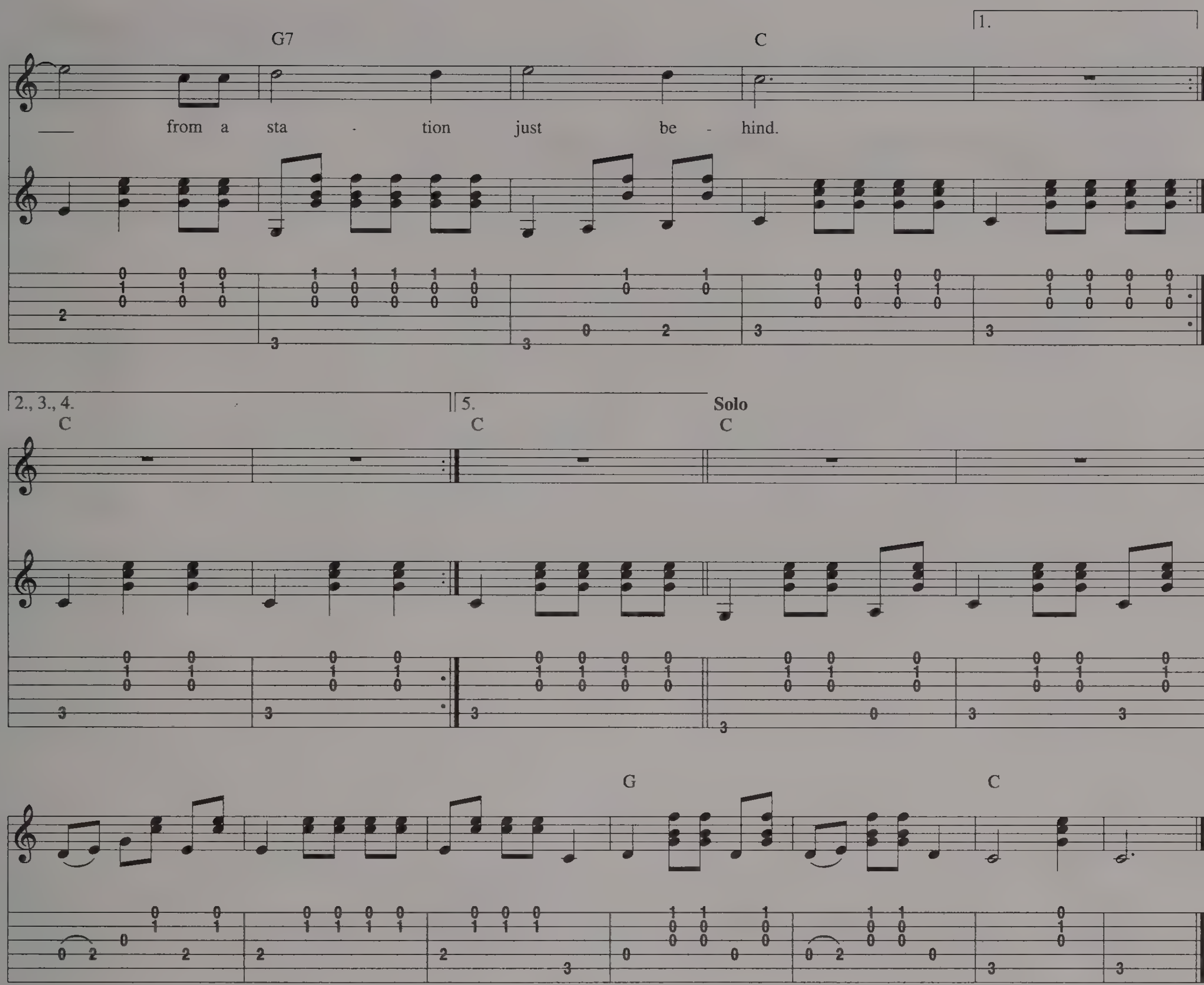
Tune down 3 frets

① = D♭ ④ = B
② = A♭ ⑤ = G♭
③ = E ⑥ = D♭




F
C
G7
C
Verse
C
1. A - long came the F. F. V.,
2. - 5. See Additional Lyrics
F
C
the swift - est on the line,


run - ning o'er the C. and O. Road, just
G7
twen - ty min - utes be - hind,
C
run - ing
in - to Se - ville,
F
head - quar - ters on the
C
line, re - ceiv - ing her strict or - ders



Additional Lyrics

2. Georgie's mother came to him with a bucket on her arm,
saying, "My darling son, be careful how you run,
for many a man has lost his life, in trying to make lost time,
and if you run your engine right you'll get there just on time."

3. Up the road she darted, against a rock she crushed.
Upside down the engine turned and Georgie's breast did smash.
His head was against the firebox door, the flames were rolling high.
"I'm glad I was born for an engineer, to die on the C&O Road."

4. The doctor said to Georgie, "My darling boy be still.
Your life may yet be saved if it is God's blessed will."
"Oh no," said George, "that will not do. I want to die so free.
I want to die for the engine I love, One Hundred and Forty Three."

5. The doctor said to Georgie, "Your life cannot be saved.
Murdered upon a railroad and laid in a lonesome grave."
His face was covered up with blood, his eyes you could not see,
and the very last words poor Georgie said was "Nearer my God to thee."

First Atlanta Sessions
Atlanta, Georgia
November 22–24, 1929

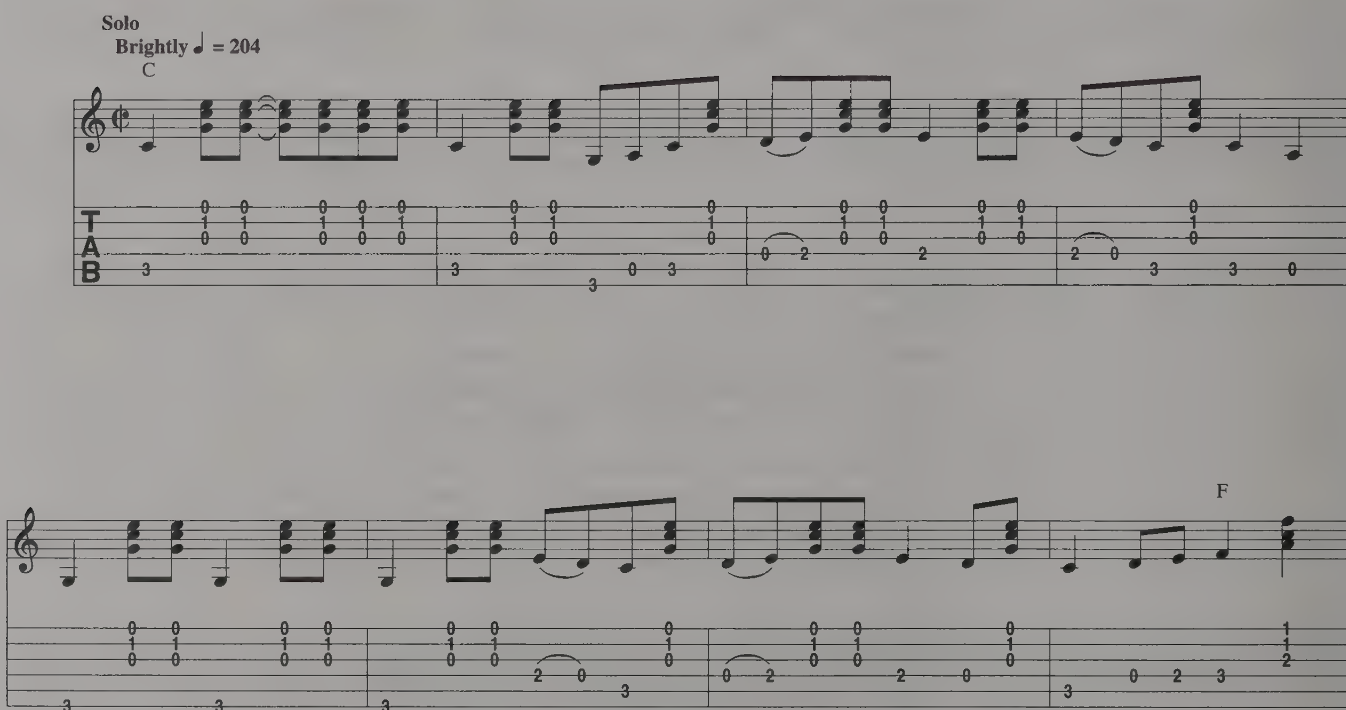
Homestead on the Farm

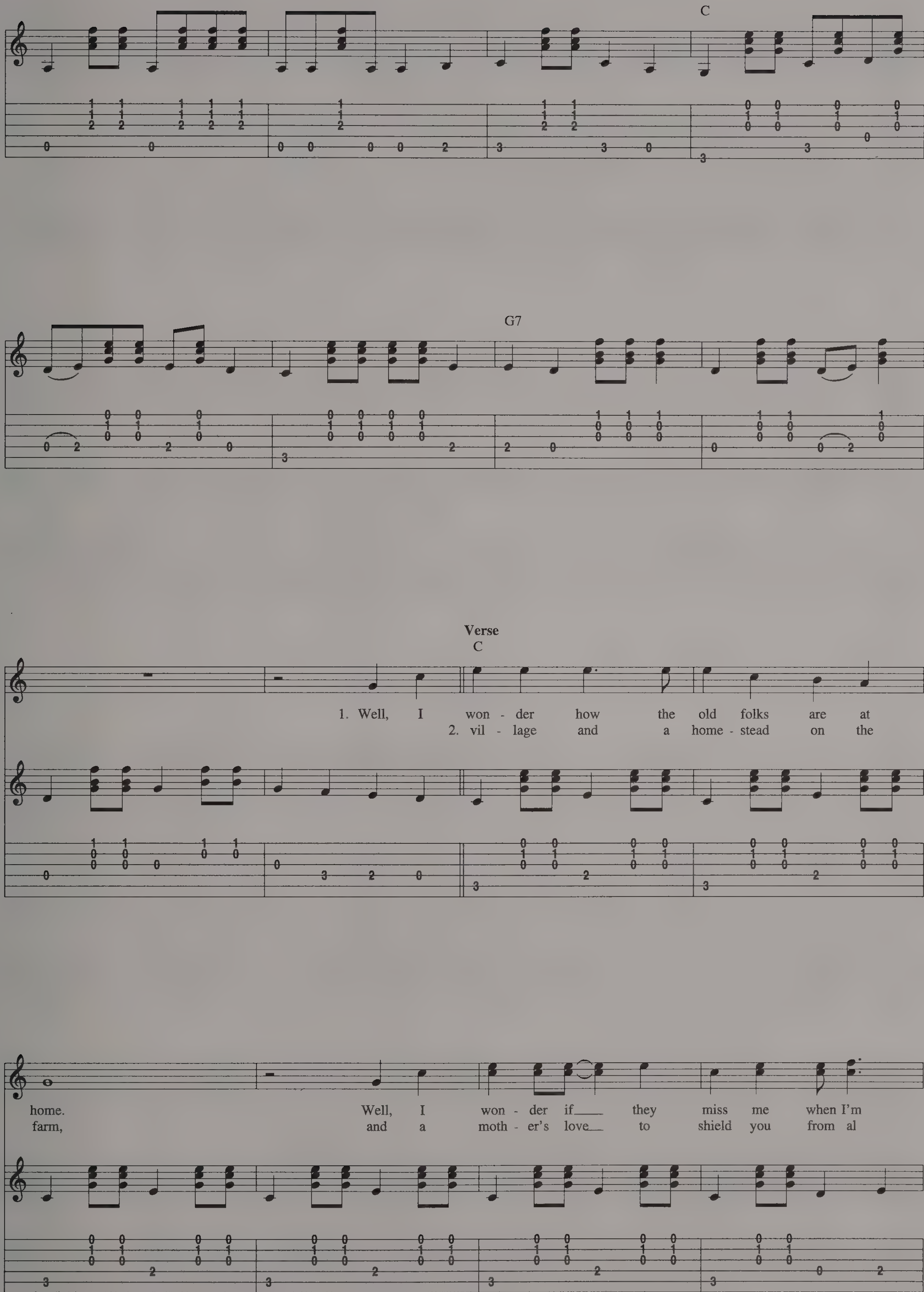
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

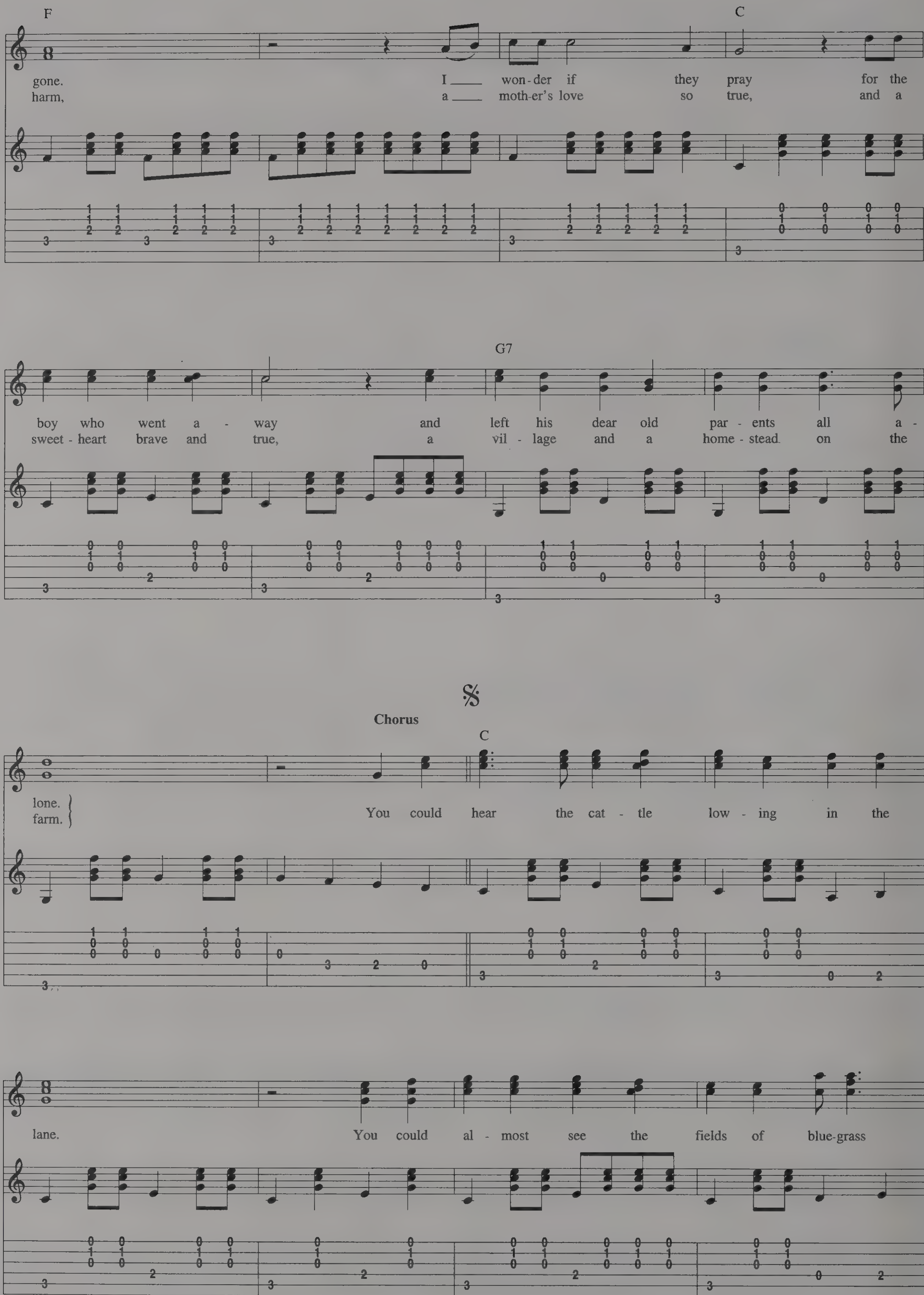
On November 22, 24 and 25, 1929, the Carters recorded another dozen songs for Victor in Atlanta, Georgia. Despite their royalty earnings, earlier in the year A.P. had found it necessary to take a temporary factory job in Detroit. On the other hand, Maybelle bought a new guitar for this session, replacing her little Stella (she called it “one of those itty bitty Martins”) with her famous arch-top L-5, a Gibson guitar that meant business in any jazz, country or blues band. She paid $275 for it in a Kingsport, Tennessee music store, and she affirmed that “back then it was a lot of money to pay for a guitar.”

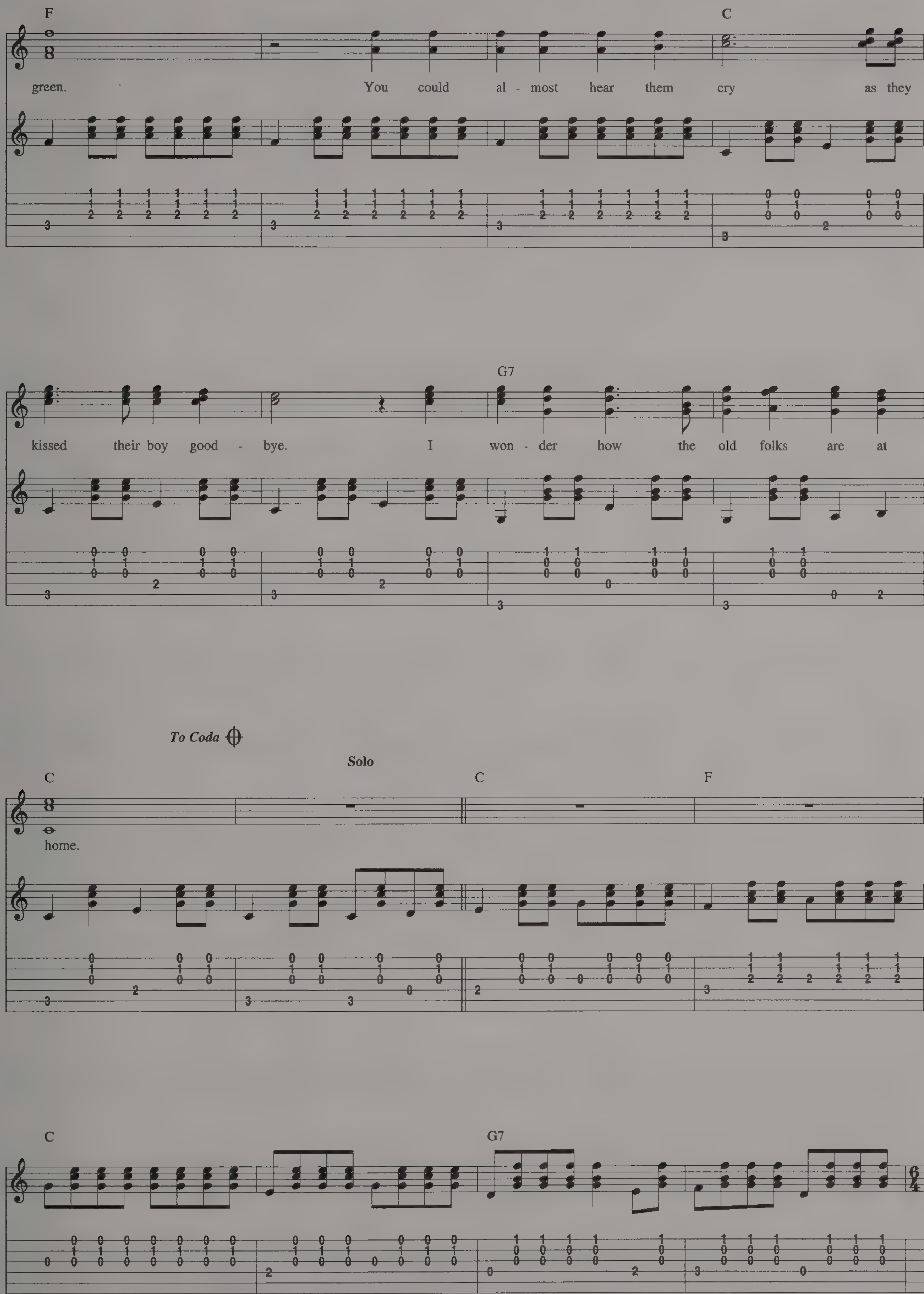
“Homestead on the Farm,” inspired by a parlor song from early 20th century, is typical of the “I went to the city to seek my fortune and now I’m longing for my country home” genre. In fact, for her mid-tune solo Maybelle played a quote from “Home Sweet Home.” In the 1950s, Mac Wiseman & Flatt and Scruggs recorded bluegrass versions using the title, “I Wonder How the Old Folks Are at Home.”

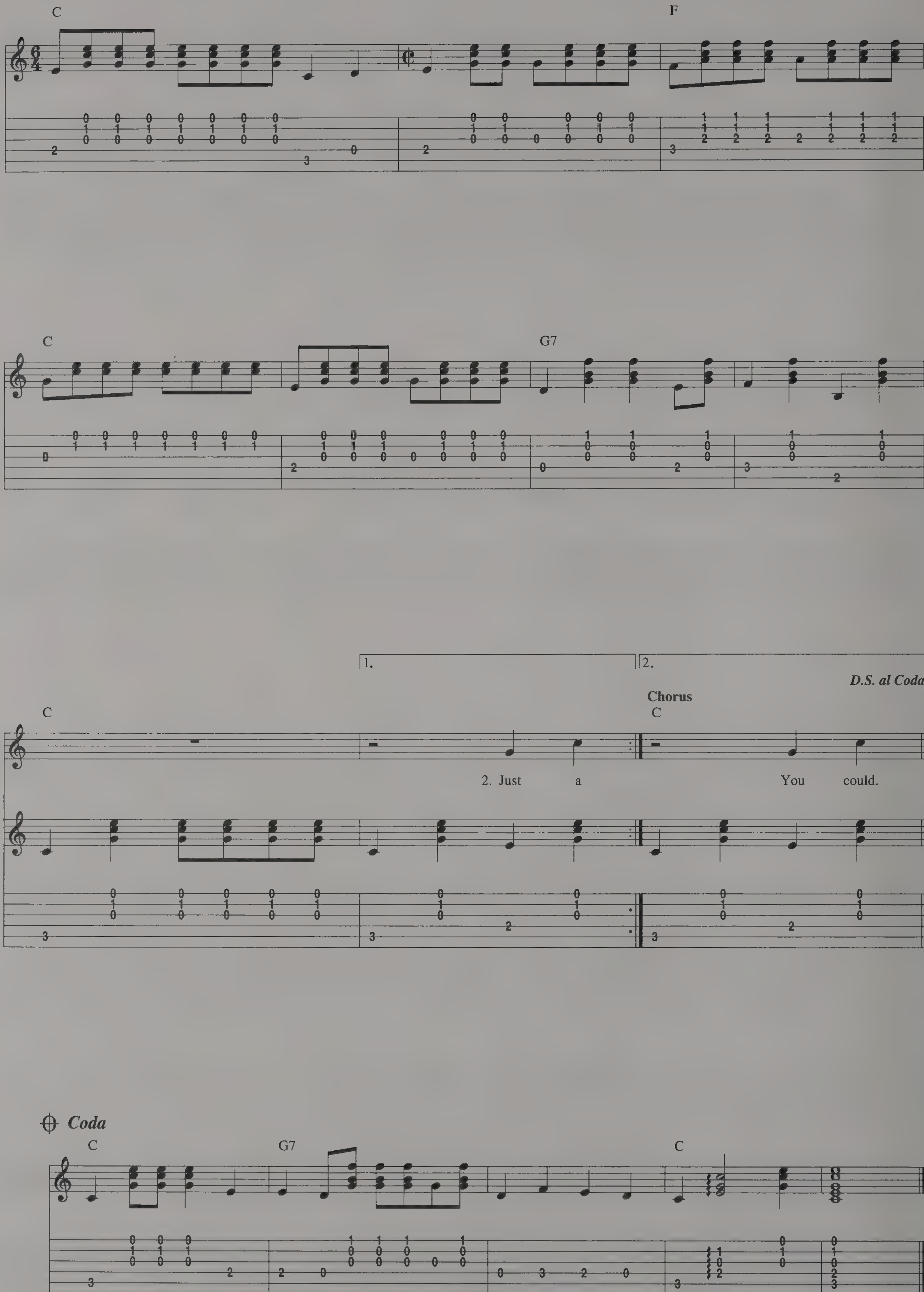
Tuned down 2 frets
(1) = D (4) = C
(2) = A (5) = G
(3) = F (6) = D




C
G7
Verse
C
1. Well, I won - der how the old folks are at
2. vil - lage and a home - stead on the
home.
farm,
Well, I won - der if they miss me when I'm
and a moth - er's love to shield you from al


F
C
gone. I ___ won-der if they pray for the
harm, a ___ moth-er's love so true, and a
G7
boy who went a - way and left his dear old par - ents all a -
sweet - heart brave and true, a vil - lage and a home - stead on the
Chorus
C
lone.
farm.
You could hear the cat - tle low - ing in the
lane. You could al - most see the fields of blue-grass


F
C
green. You could al - most hear them cry as they
kissed their boy good - bye. I won - der how the old folks are at
G7
To Coda
Solo
C
F
home.
C
G7

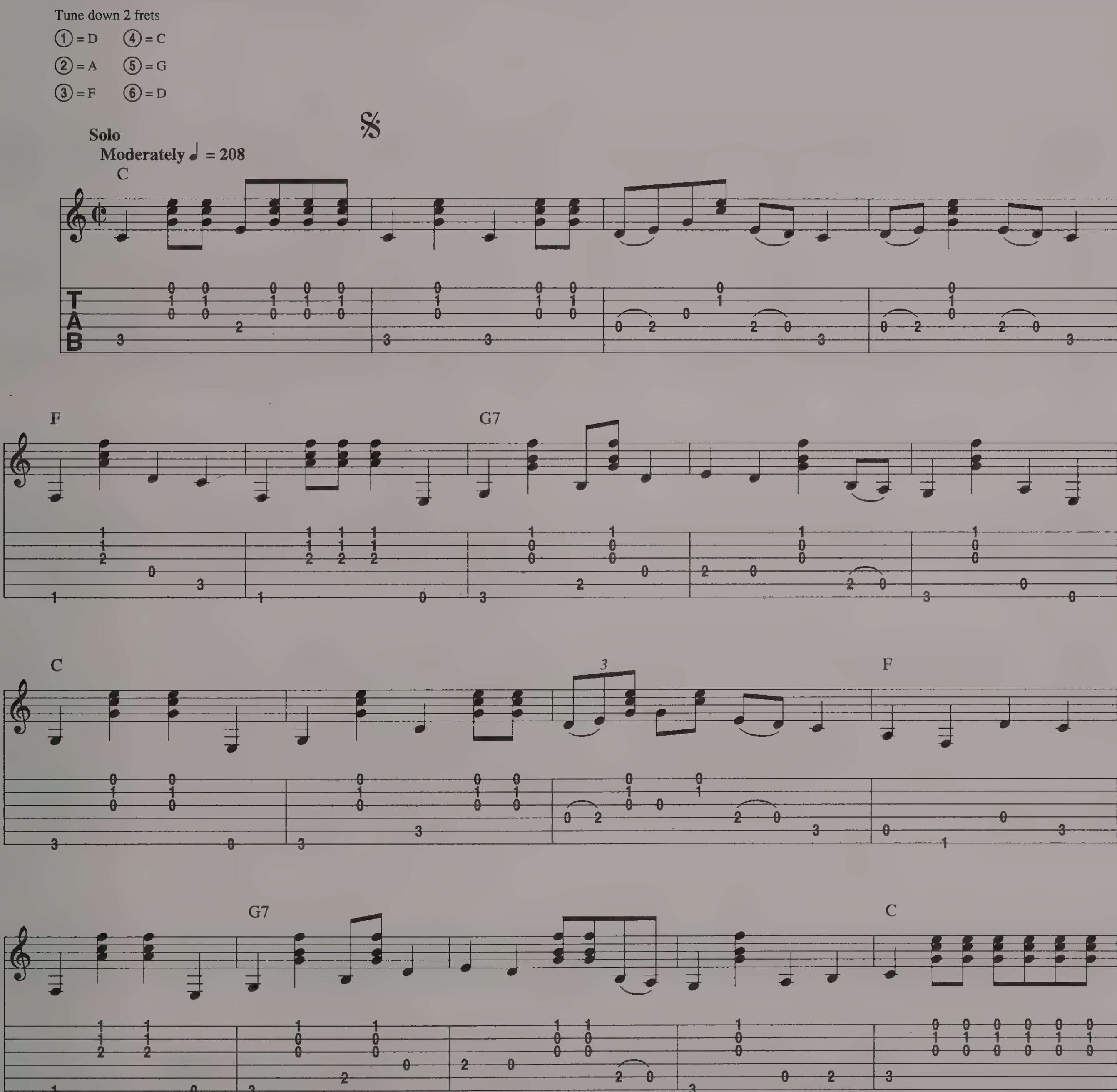

C
F
C
G7
1.
2.
D.S. al Coda
Chorus
C
2. Just a
You could.
Coda
C
G7
C

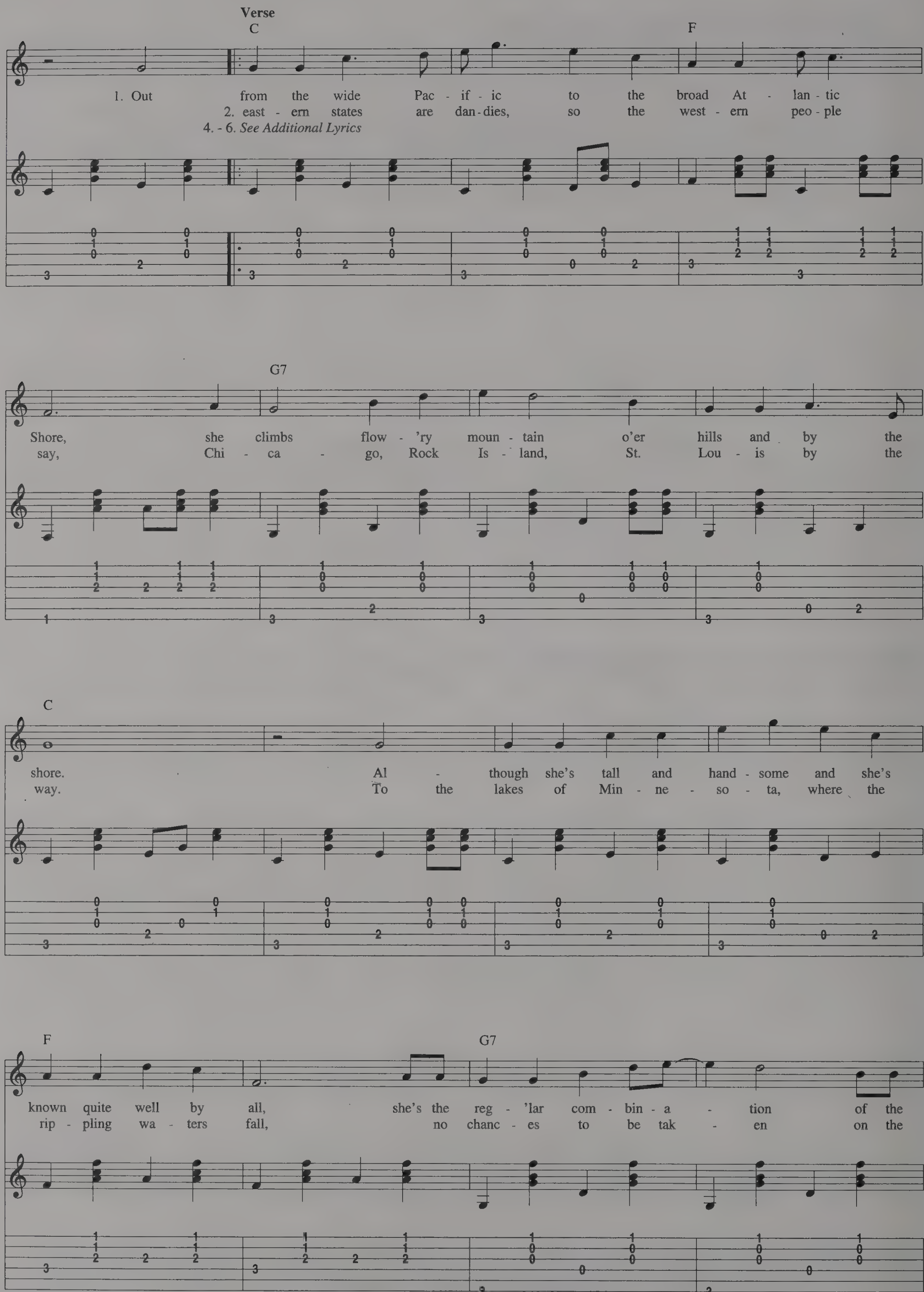
Wabash Cannonball

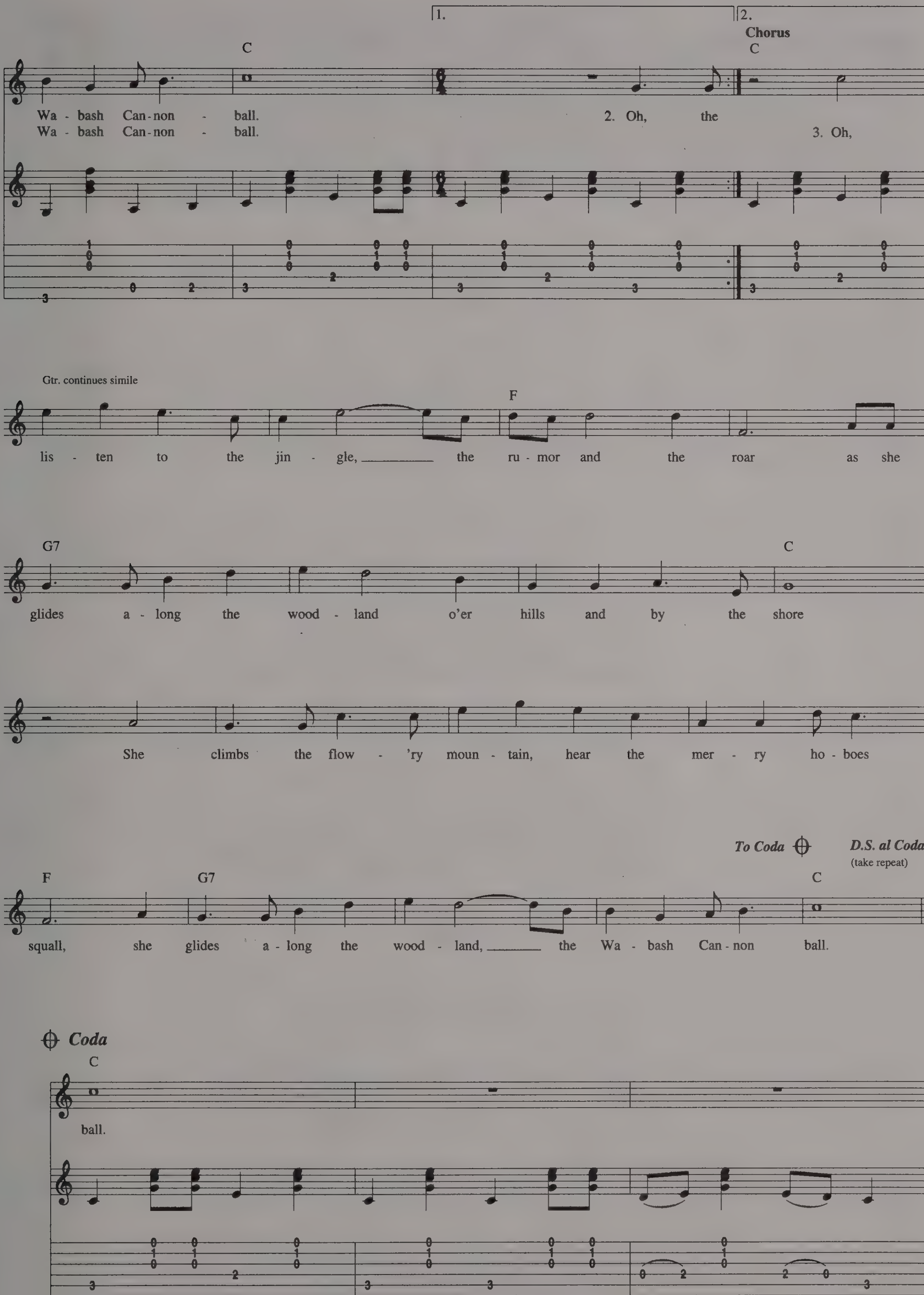
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

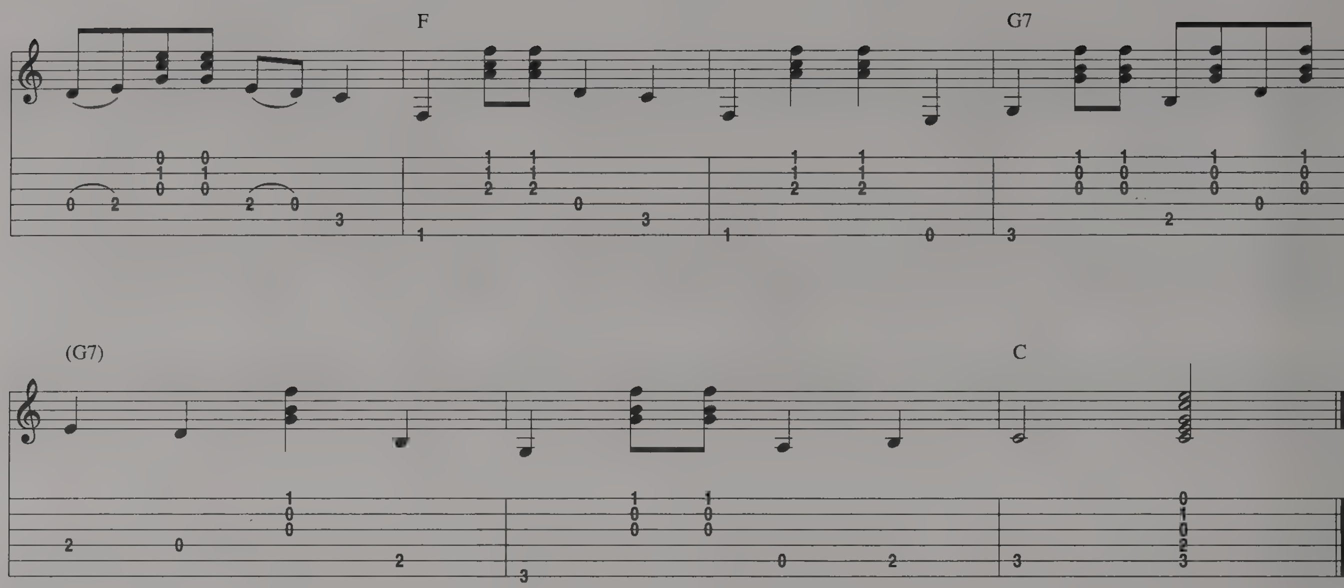
One of the Carter Family's most popular tunes, "Wabash Cannonball" became Roy Acuff's theme song, and it was recorded by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Chet Atkins, the Brothers Four, Doc Watson, Mac Wiseman, Townes Van Zandt, the Chieftans, Floyd Cramer, Richie Cole, Robert Fripp, Arlo Guthrie, Blind Willie Mctell, Norman and Nancy Blake, U. Utah Phillips, Boots Randolph, and Willie Nelson with Leon Russell! Woody Guthrie used the tune and wrote new lyrics about the "Grand Coulee Dam."

Sara, who sang the tune at the Carter's Atlanta sessions, learned part of it from a poem they found on a pamphlet in Tennessee.




Verse
C
F
1. Out from the wide Pac - if - ic to the broad At - lan - tic
2. east - ern states are dan - dies, so the west - ern peo - ple
4. - 6. See Additional Lyrics
G7
Shore, she climbs flow - 'ry moun - tain o'er hills and by the
say, Chi - ca - go, Rock Is - land, St. Lou - is by the
C
shore. Al - though she's tall and hand - some and she's
way. To the lakes of Min - ne - so - ta, where the
F
G7
known quite well by all, she's the reg - 'lar com - bin - a - tion of the
rip - pling wa - ters fall, no chanc - es to be tak - en on the


1.
2.
Chorus
C
Wa - bash Can-non - ball. 2. Oh, the
Wa - bash Can-non - ball. 3. Oh,
Gtr. continues simile
F
lis - ten to the jin - gle, the ru - mor and the roar as she
G7
glides a - long the wood - land o'er hills and by the shore
She climbs the flow - 'ry moun - tain, hear the mer - ry ho - boes
To Coda
D.S. al Coda
(take repeat)
squall, she glides a - long the wood - land, the Wa - bash Can - non ball.
Coda
ball.



Additional Lyrics

4. Oh, here's old Daddy Cleaton, let his name forever be,
and long be remembered in the courts of Tennessee.
For he is a good old rounder 'til the curtain 'round him fall.
He'll be carried back to victory on the Wabash Cannonball.

5. I have rode the IC Limited, also the Royal Blue,
across the eastern countries on L car number two.
I have rode those highball trains from coast to coast, that's all,
but I have found no equal to the Wabash Cannonball.

6. Oh listen to the jingle, the rumor and the roar
as she glides along the woodland, o'er hills and by the shore.
She climbs the flow'ry mountain, hear the merry hobos squall.
She glides along the woodland, the Wabash Cannonball.

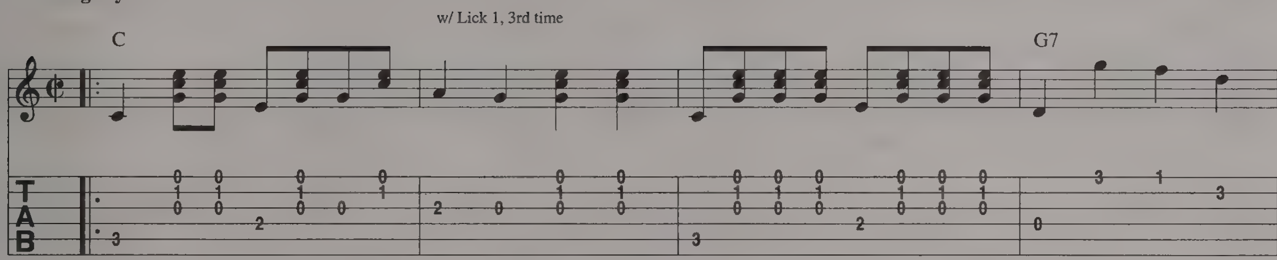
Jimmie Brown the Newsboy

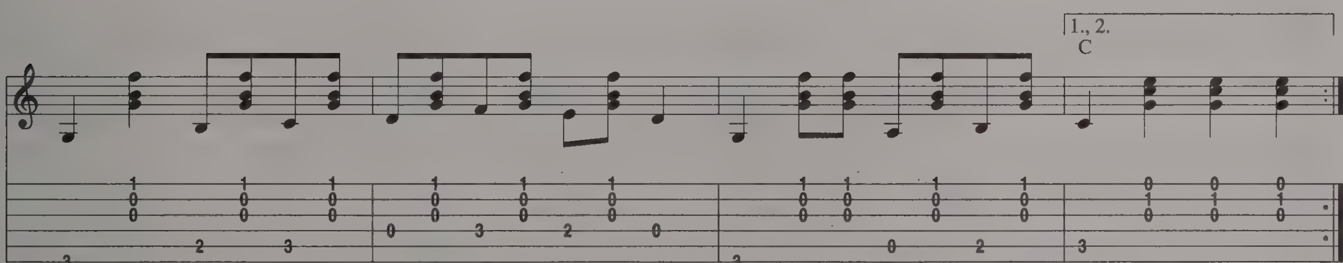
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Recorded the second day of the Atlanta sessions, "Jimmy Brown the Newsboy" fits in the maudlin genre of "orphan child" songs that was very popular in early country and bluegrass music, surpassed in its pathos only by the grim genre of "dying child" songs. Okay, technically Jimmy was not an orphan because his mother was alive, but his father died a drunkard and he's "awfully cold and hungry…" and ragged. The song was popularized in the 1950s by Flatt and Scruggs.

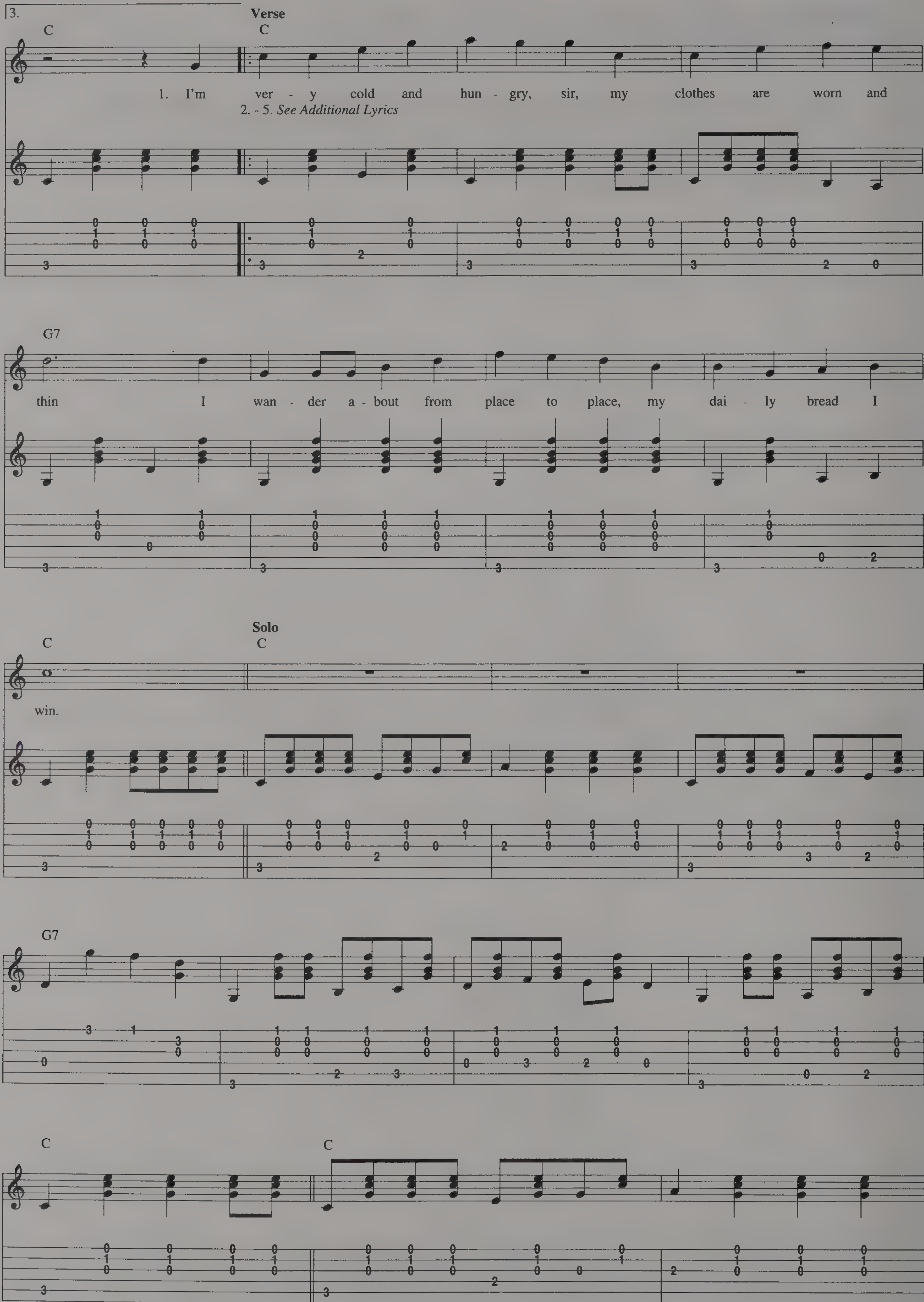
Tuning
(1) = D (4) = C
(2) = A (5) = G
(3) = F (6) = D

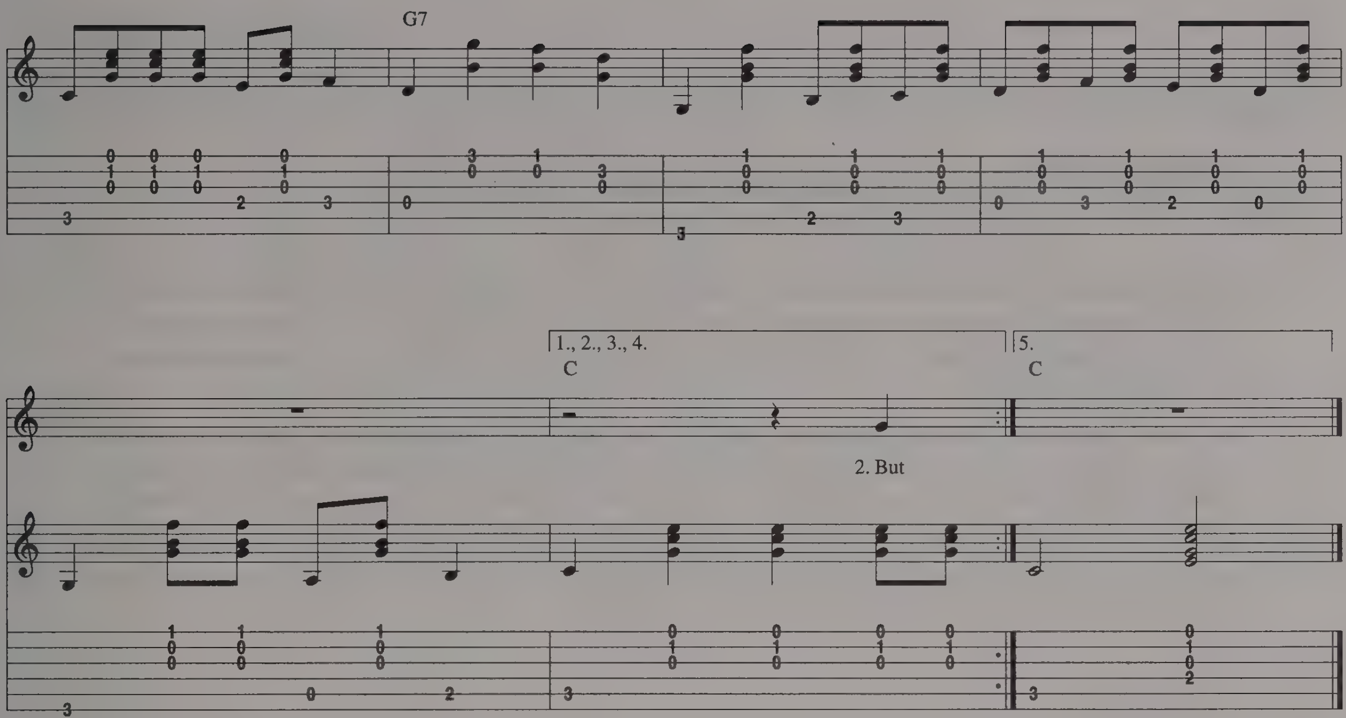
Solo
Brightly ♩ = 216








3.
Verse
C
1. I'm very cold and hungry, sir, my clothes are worn and
2. - 5. See Additional Lyrics
G7
thin I wander about from place to place, my daily bread I
win.
Solo



Additional Lyrics

2. Don't never mind, sir, how I look, don't swear at me or frown.
   I sell the morning paper, sir, my name is Jimmy Brown.

3. I sell the morning paper, sir, my name is Jimmy Brown.
   'Most everybody knows I am the newsboy of the town.

4. My father was a drunkard, sir, I've heard my mother say,
   but I am helping mother, sir, as I journey on my way.

5. I sell the morning paper, sir, my name is Jimmy Brown.
   'Most everybody knows I am the newsboy of the town.

Memphis Sessions
Memphis, Tennessee
May 24, 1930

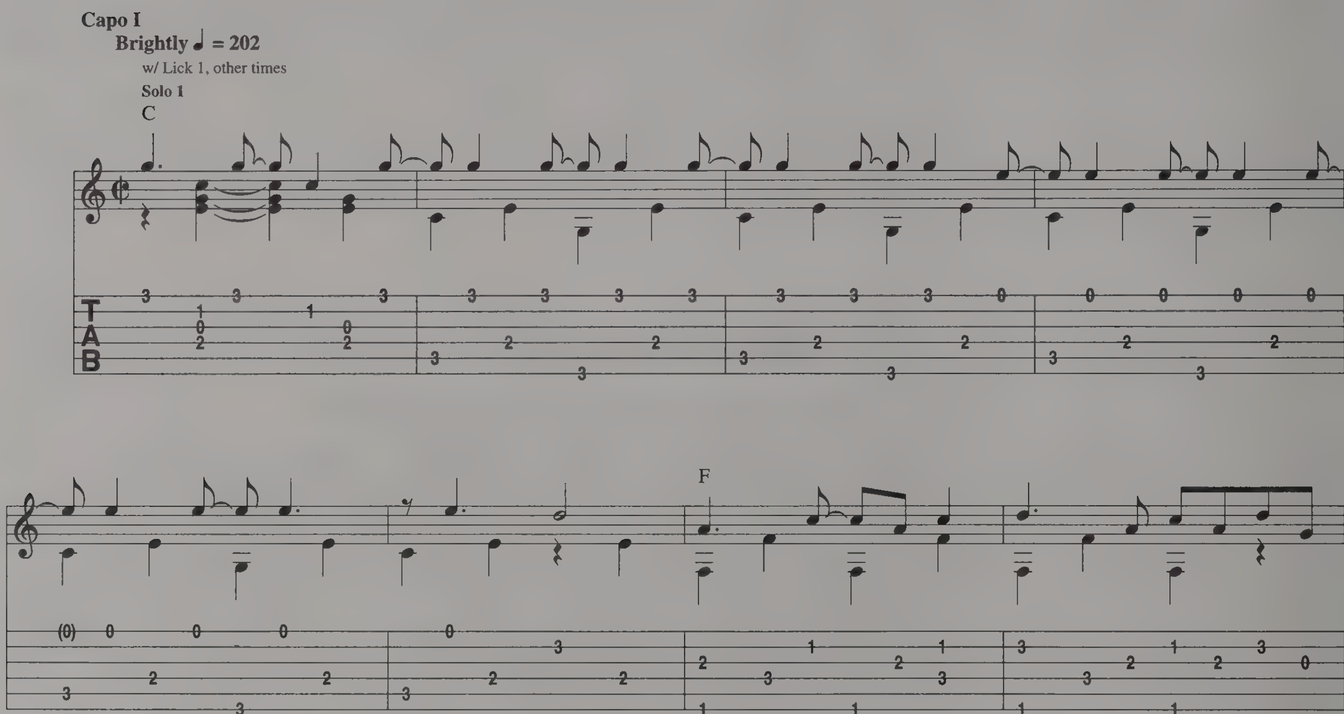
Cannonball (Cannonball Blues)

Words and Music by A.P. Carter, Maybelle Carter and Sara Carter

For their next Victor sessions, the Carter Family drove five hundred miles to Memphis Tennessee on May 24, 1930, and recorded nine songs in a temporary studio in the Municipal Auditorium. Lesley Riddle taught the Carters "The Cannonball," and said that Maybelle fingerpicked it like he taught her. A.P., stepping out of character, sang the lead vocal.

The melody is related to "White House Blues," which famous banjoist/string band leader Charlie Poole recorded in 1926. Oddly, the second guitar solo, which Maybelle played after every verse, has a different melody and chord progression than the sung verses. The bar of 6/4 (in the first verse) has only four beats in all the other verses.

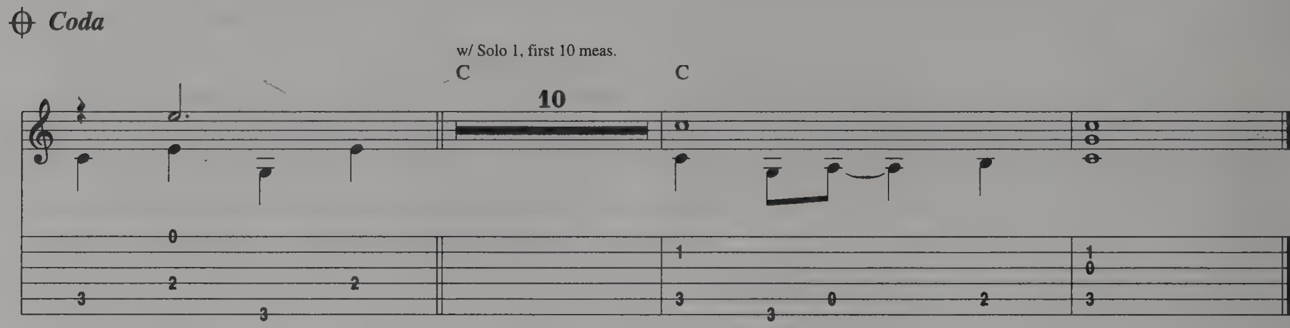
In the music notation on this and other fingerpicking songs, the notes with stems pointing up are picked by the fingers; notes with stems pointing down are picked by the thumb.






End Solo 1
C G7 C
w/ Solo 1
Verse
C
Guitar simile
1. You can wash my jump - er, starch my o - ver -
alls, catch a train they call the Can - non
F
ball, from Buf - fa - lo to Wash - ing - ton.
C G C
To Coda
Solo 2
C7 F
C C7 F





Additional Lyrics

2. Yonder comes a train, comin' down the track,
   carryin' me away, but ain't a-gonna carry me back,
   my honey babe, my blue-eyed babe.

3. My baby left me, she even took my shoes.
   Enough to give me the doggone weary blues.
   She's gone, she's solid gone.

4. I'm going up North, I'm going up North this Fall.
   If luck don't change I won't be back at all.
   My honey babe, I'm leaving you.

When the Springtime Comes Again

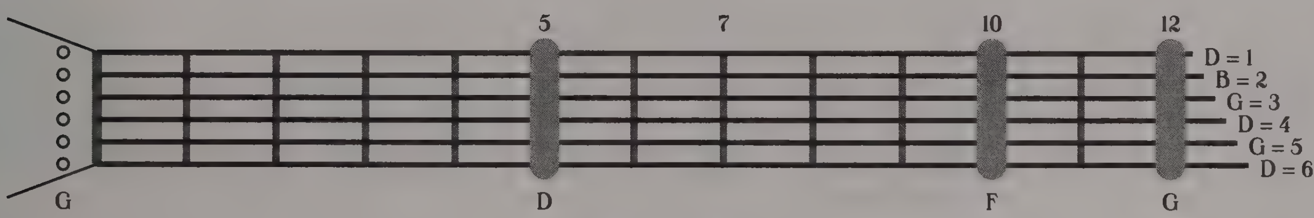
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Sara learned "When the Springtime Comes Again" from a neighbor, who called it "Little Annie." The Carters recorded it the same day as "The Cannonball," and the song has been done by many bluegrassers, including the Lilly Brothers and multi-string player Sandy Rothman.

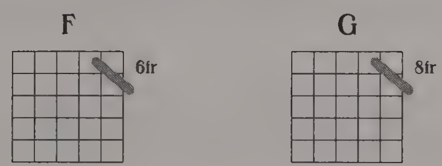
"When the Springtime Comes Again" features an unusual slide guitar performance from Maybelle. Since the song is in the key of C, most slide guitarists would have tuned to open C, but Maybelle played slide on this song in open G tuning, and used the chords shown below. This approach was more typical of Hawaiian or country lap-style slide players than of blues bottleneckers. The open G tuning is the same as the "open A" she used on "Foggy Mountain Top," but two frets lower.

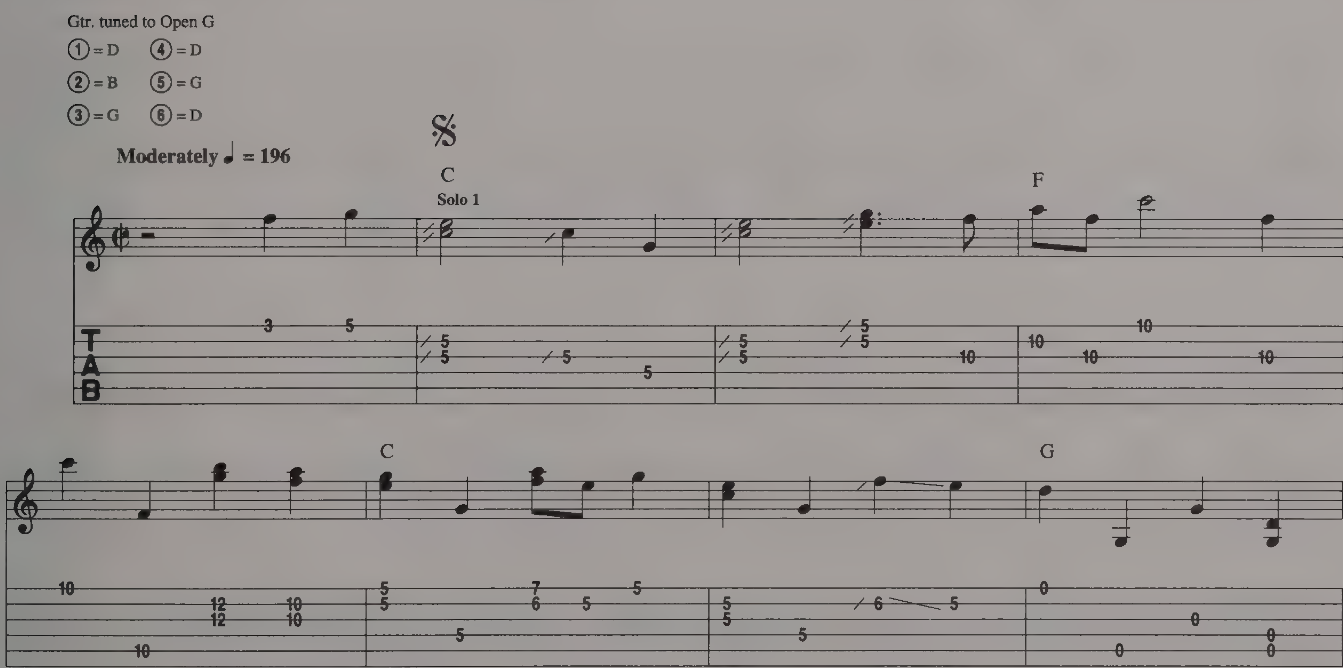
There's a "slant chord" in the 6th bar of this song that requires you to slant the steel at an angle, to play the 2nd string/6th fret and 1st string/7th fret simultaneously. Maybelle may have played similar slant chords (the ones shown below) in bars 5 and 13.

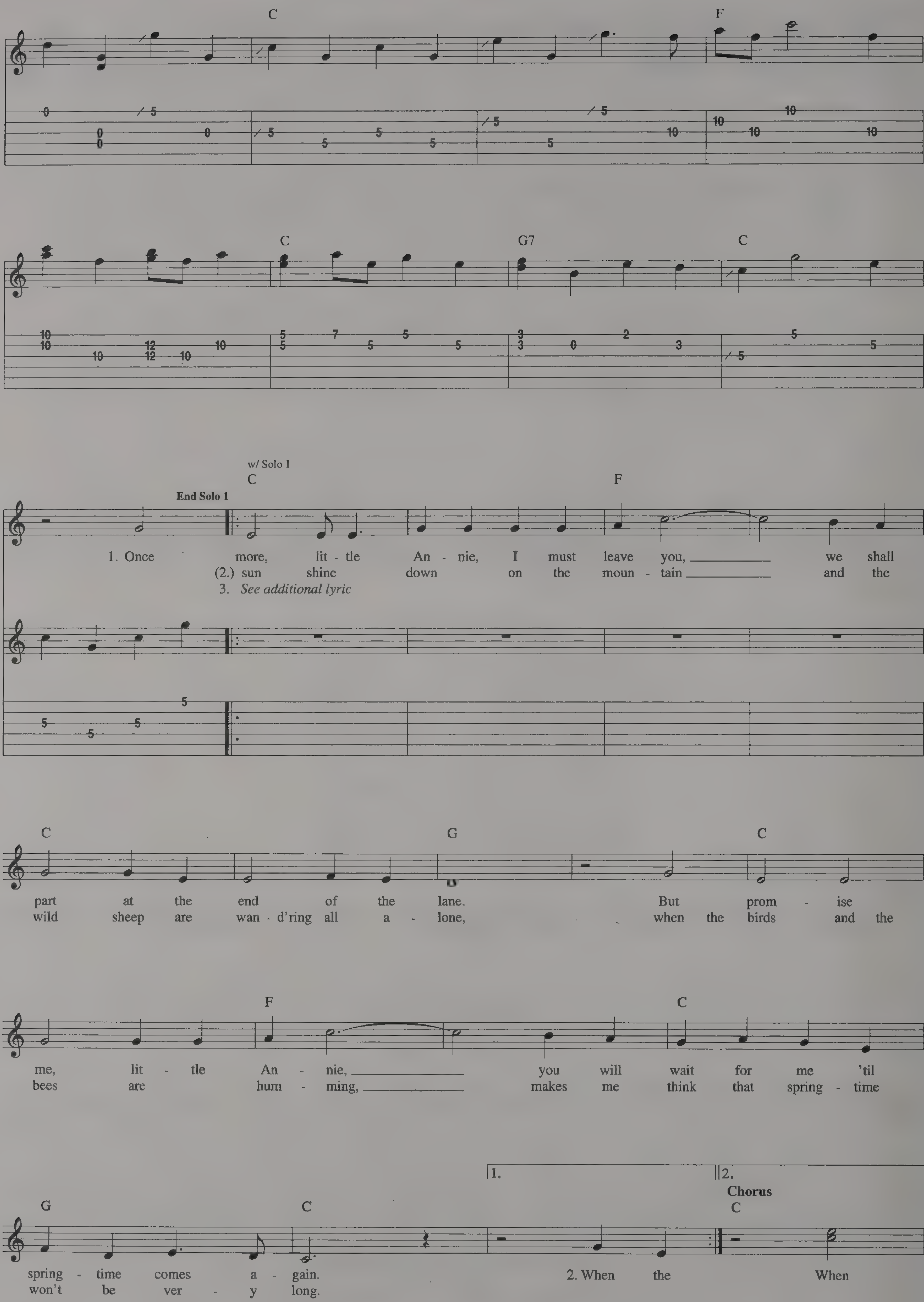
*The song's actual key is C#. Sara must have been playing autoharp in C, tuned a bit high (or multiple remasters have moved the key up a half-step), because there was no key of C# or D on the old autoharps. Tune to open G# to match Maybelle's guitar. From 6th to 1st string, that's D#, G#, D#, G#, C, D#.

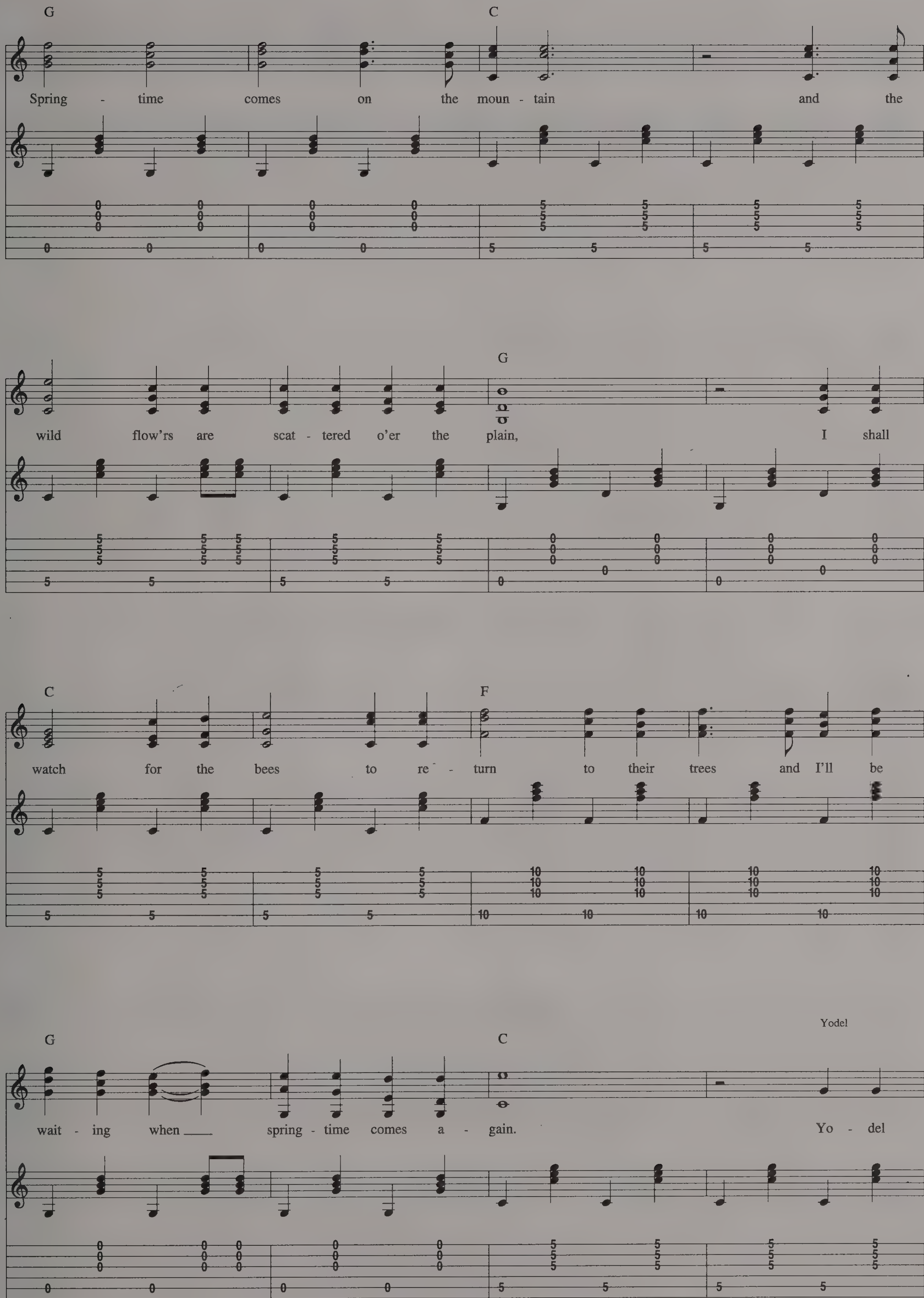


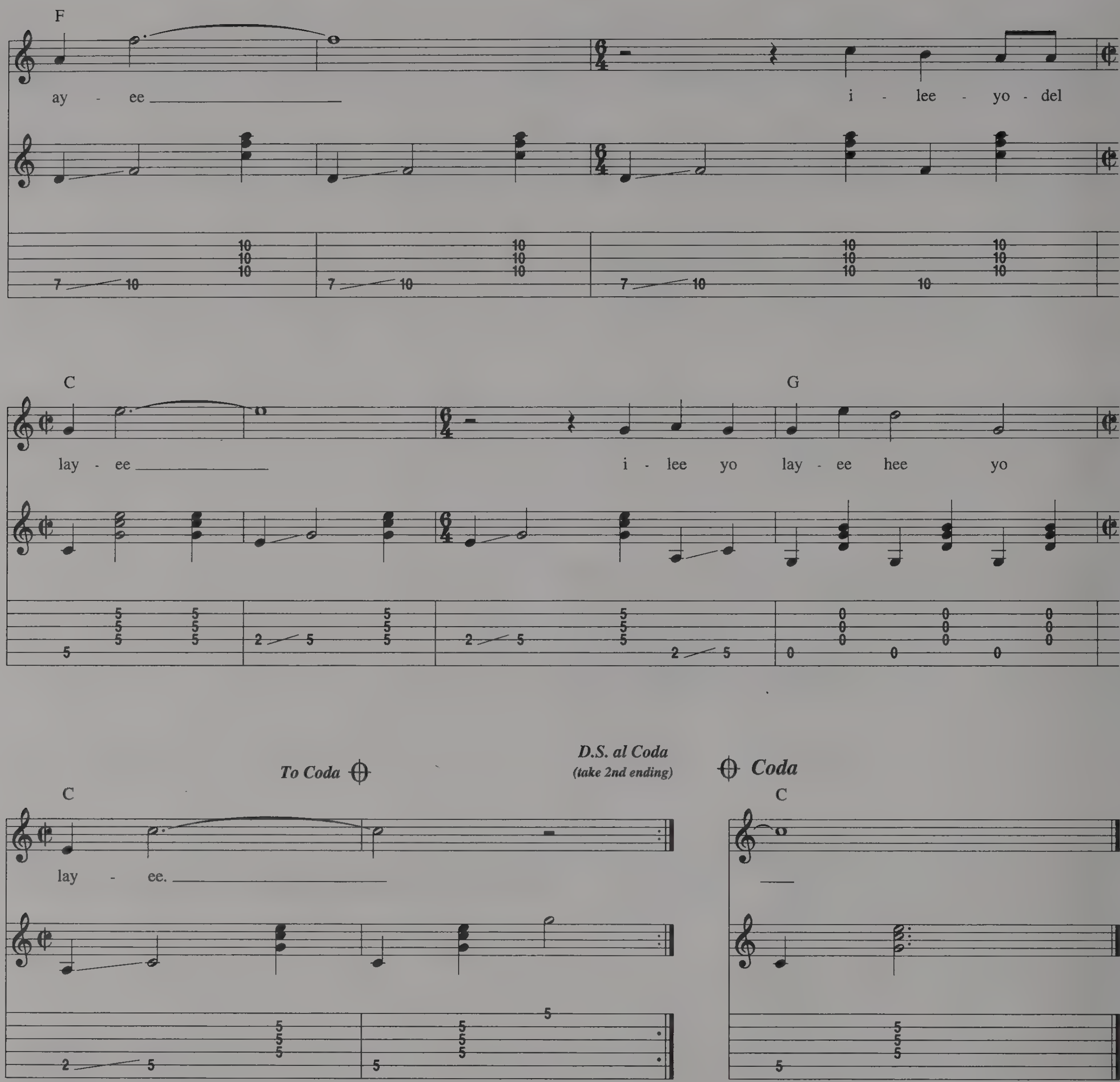
Slant Chords






C
F
C
G7
C
w/ Solo 1
End Solo 1
C
F
1. Once more, lit - tle An - nie, I must leave you, we shall
(2.) sun shine down on the moun - tain and the
3. See additional lyric
C
G
C
part at the end of the lane. But prom - ise
wild sheep are wan - d'ring all a - lone, when the birds and the
F
C
me, lit - tle An - nie, you will wait for me 'til
bees are hum - ming, makes me think that spring - time
G
C
1.
2.
Chorus
C
spring - time comes a - gain. 2. When the When
won't be ver - y long.


G
C
Spring - time comes on the moun - tain and the
wild flow'rs are scat - tered o'er the plain,
G
I shall
C
F
watch for the bees to re - turn to their trees and I'll be
G
C
Yodel
wait - ing when ___ spring - time comes a - gain.
Yo - del



Additional Lyrics

3. Now springtime is here, little Annie,
I am on my way back to the lane,
for you promised me, little Annie,
you'd be waiting when springtime come again

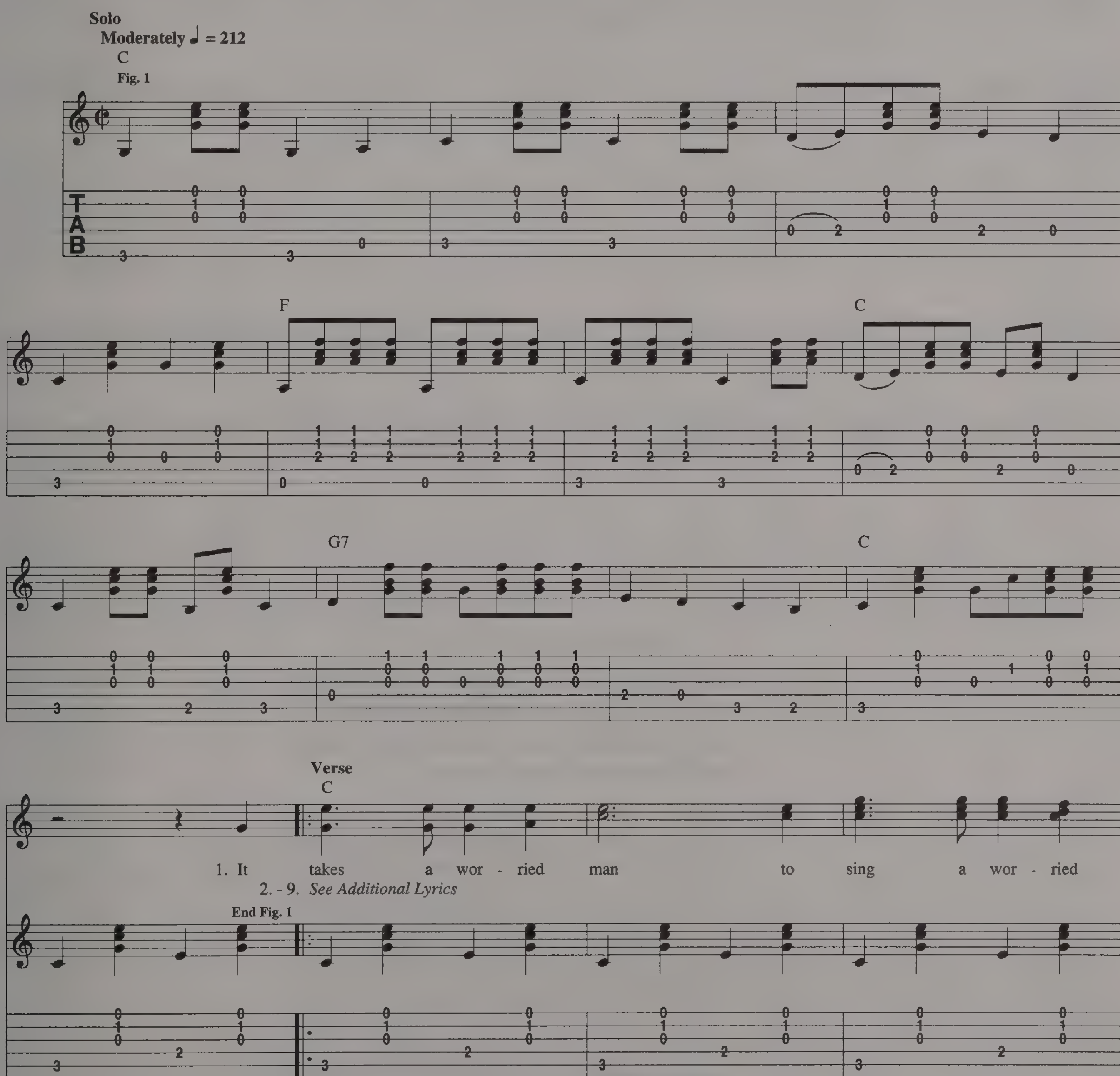
Worried Man Blues

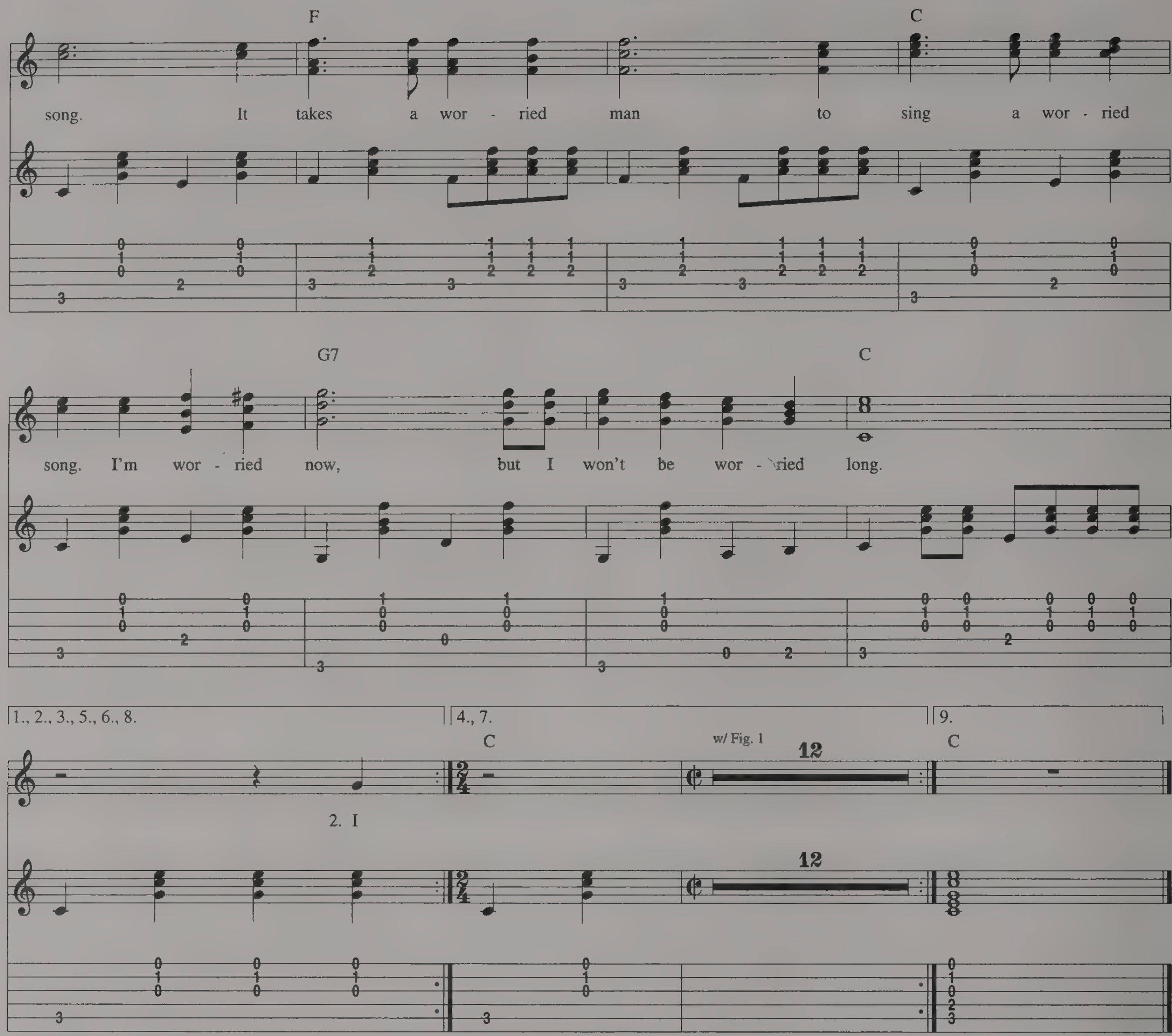
Words and Music by A.P. Carter, Maybelle Carter and Sara Carter

Recorded at the first Memphis sessions, "Worried Man Blues" was a big hit for the Carters. Sara could not remember where they learned the prison song. It was later recorded by the Blue Sky Boys, Woody Guthrie, Flatt and Scruggs and others. Many people associate the song with the very successful 1959 version by the commercial folk group, the Kingston Trio, who changed the twelve-bar blues into a sixteen-bar song and added new, funny verses. The Carters' verse about the sixteen-coach train resurfaced in Junior Parker's 1953 "Mystery Train," which Elvis Presley recorded in 1955.

Tuned down 2 frets

(1) = D (4) = C
(2) = A (5) = G
(3) = F (6) = D





Additional Lyrics

2. I went across the river, I lay down to sleep, (2 times)
   when I woke up with the shackles on my feet.
3. Twenty-nine links of chain around my leg, (2 times)
   and on each link an initial of my name.
4. **Chorus:**
   It takes a worried man to sing a worried song. (2 times)
   I'm worried now, but I won't be worried long.
5. I asked the judge, "What might be my fine?" (2 times)
   "Twenty one years on the R.C. Mountain line."
6. The train arrived, sixteen coaches long. (2 times)
   The girl I love is on that train and gone.
7. **Chorus**
8. If anyone askes you who composed this song, (2 times)
   tell 'em it was I, and I sing it all day long.
9. **Chorus**

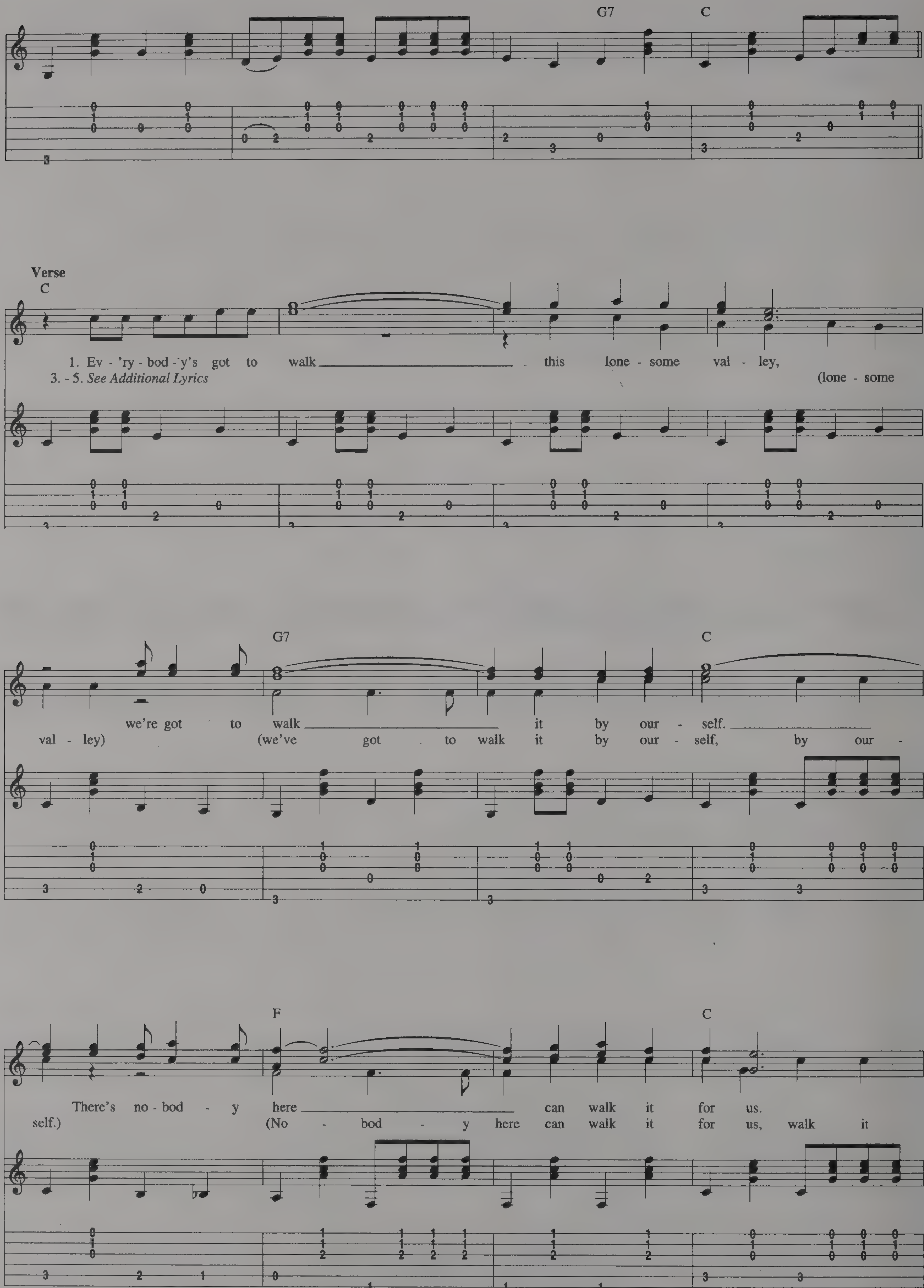
Lonesome Valley

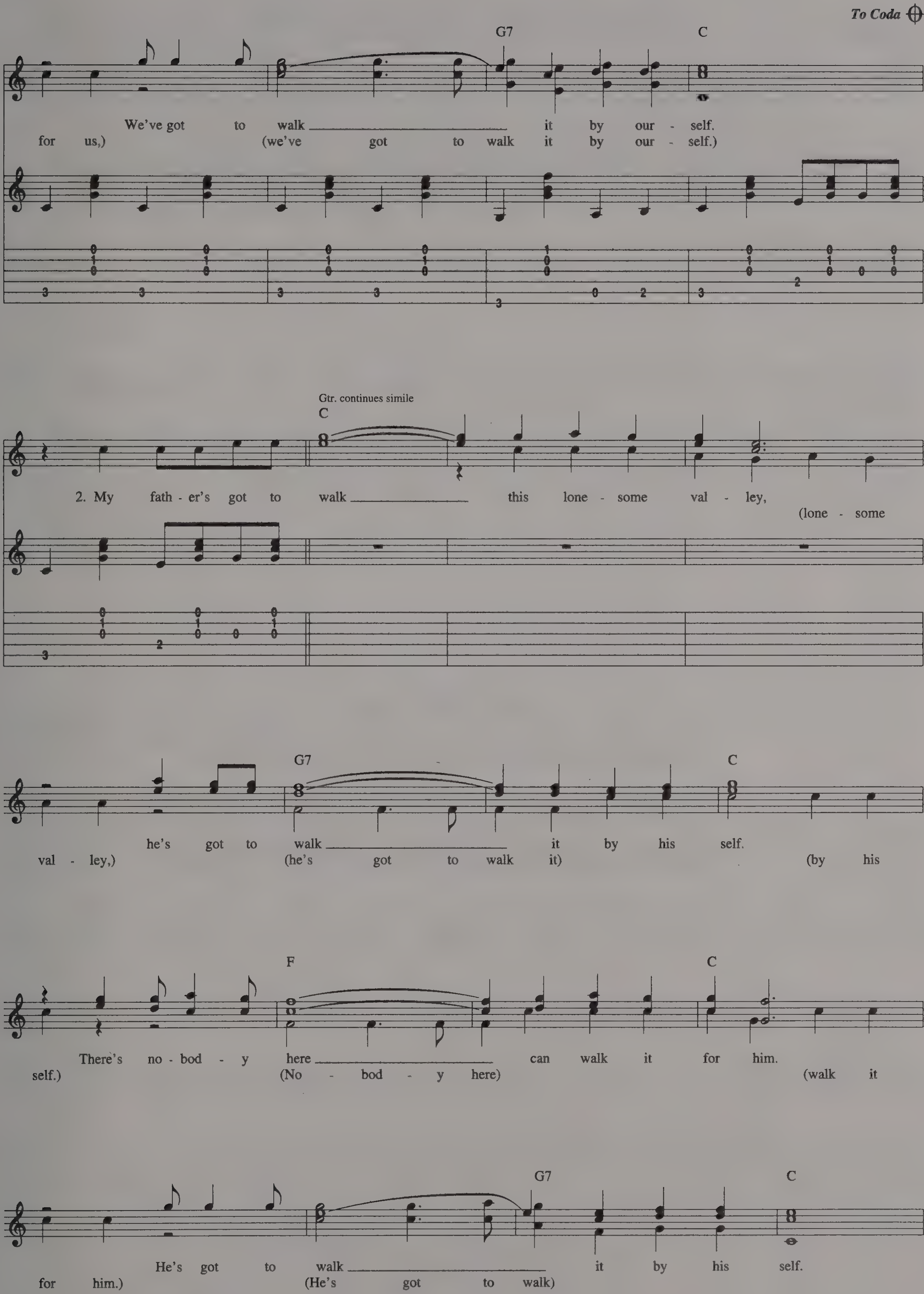
Words and Music by A.P. Carter, Maybelle Carter and Sara Carter

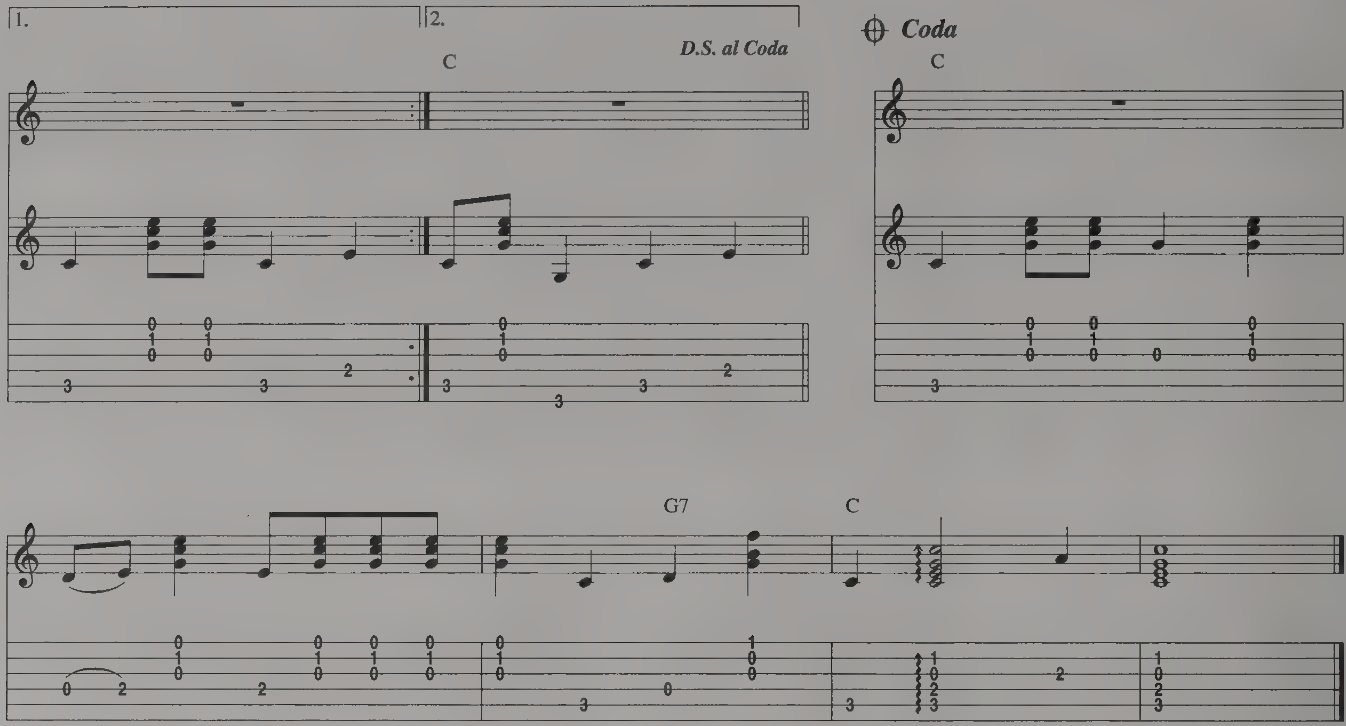
Six months after the first Memphis sessions, on November 24 and 25, 1930, the Carter Family returned to Memphis and recorded ten more songs. They may have learned "Lonesome Valley" from Lesley Riddle; it was popular among white and African-American gospel groups. The fact that all the verses are so similar made it a favorite sing-along at religious camp meetings. A similar song called "John the Baptist" was in late 19th-century hymnals, and Carl Sandburg printed it in his famous 1927 American Songbag.

During the choruses, A.P. echoed Sara and Maybelle's vocal line, as is often done in Southern gospel tunes.




G7
C
Verse
C
1. Ev - 'ry - bod - y's got to walk this lone - some val - ley,
3. - 5. See Additional Lyrics
(lone - some
G7
C
we're got to walk it by our - self.
val - ley) (we've got to walk it by our - self, by our -
F
C
There's no - bod - y here can walk it for us.
self.) (No - bod - y here can walk it for us, walk it


To Coda
G7
C
We've got to walk it by our - self.
for us,) (we've got to walk it by our - self.)
Gtr. continues simile
C
2. My fath - er's got to walk this lone - some val - ley,
(lone - some
G7
C
he's got to walk it by his self.
val - ley,) (he's got to walk it) (by his
F
C
There's no - bod - y here can walk it for him.
self.) (No - bod - y here) (walk it
G7
C
He's got to walk it by his self.
for him.) (He's got to walk)



Additional Lyrics

3. My mother's got to walk this lonesome valley, she's got to walk it by herself.
There's nobody here can walk it for her, she's got to walk it by her self.

4. Oh, sinners got to walk this lonesome valley, they've got to walk it by their self.
There's nobody here can walk it for them, they've got to walk it by their self.

5. Everybody's got to walk this lonesome valley, we've got to walk it by ourself.
There's nobody here can walk it for us, we've got to walk it by ourself.

On the Rock Where Moses Stood

Words and Music by A.P. Carter

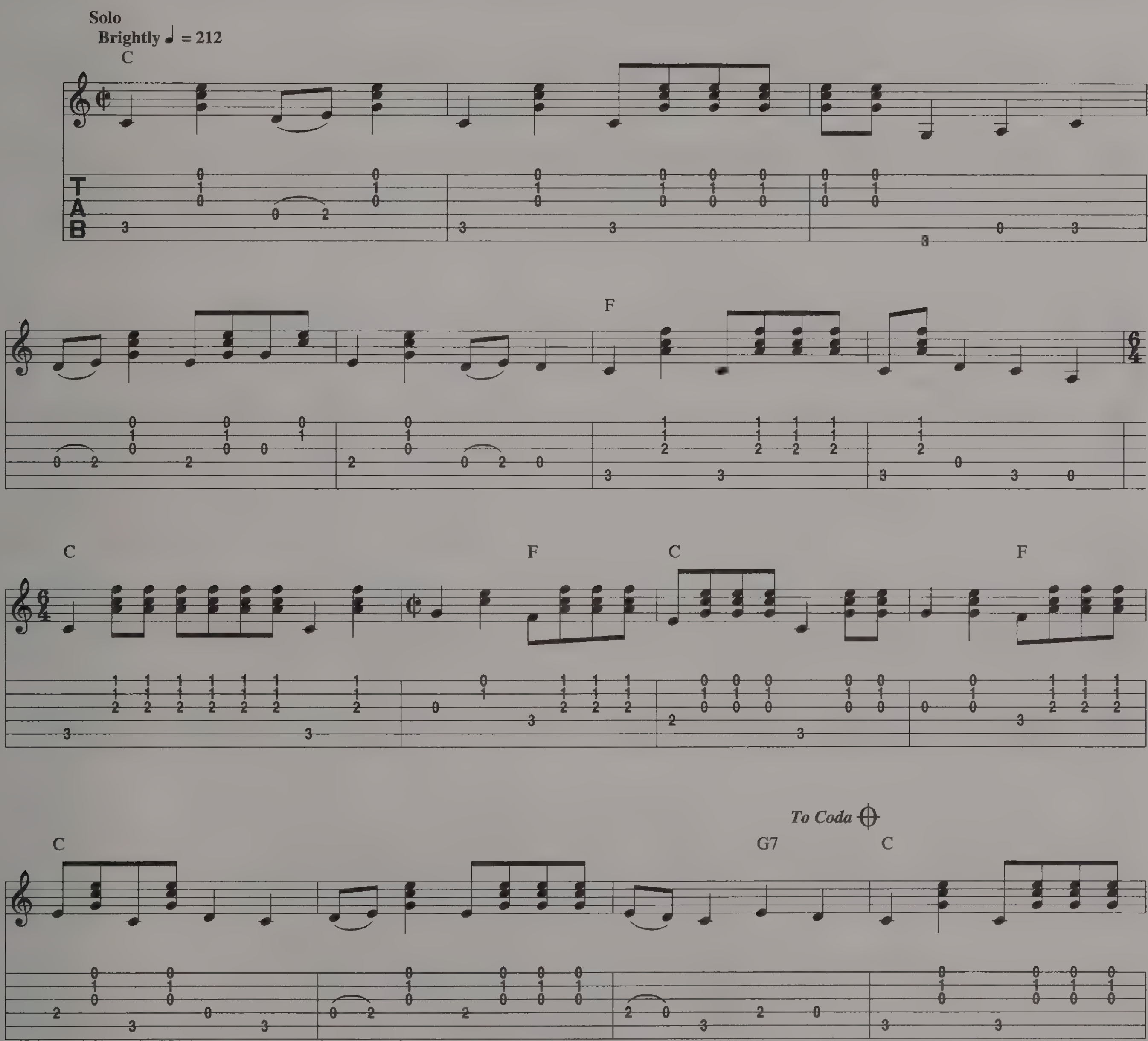
From the second Memphis sessions, "On the Rock Where Moses Stood" was popular among African-American gospel groups before the Carters recorded it. The line "If I could, I surely would stand on the rock where Moses stood" appears in another old gospel number, "Oh Mary Don't You Weep." Bill Monroe did his own version, calling it "Crying Holy Unto the Lord," and the song has become a bluegrass standard. In the late 1960s, the Band's song "When You Awake" referred to the gospel tune when they sang the ironic line "If I thought it would do any good, I'd stand on the rock where Moses stood."

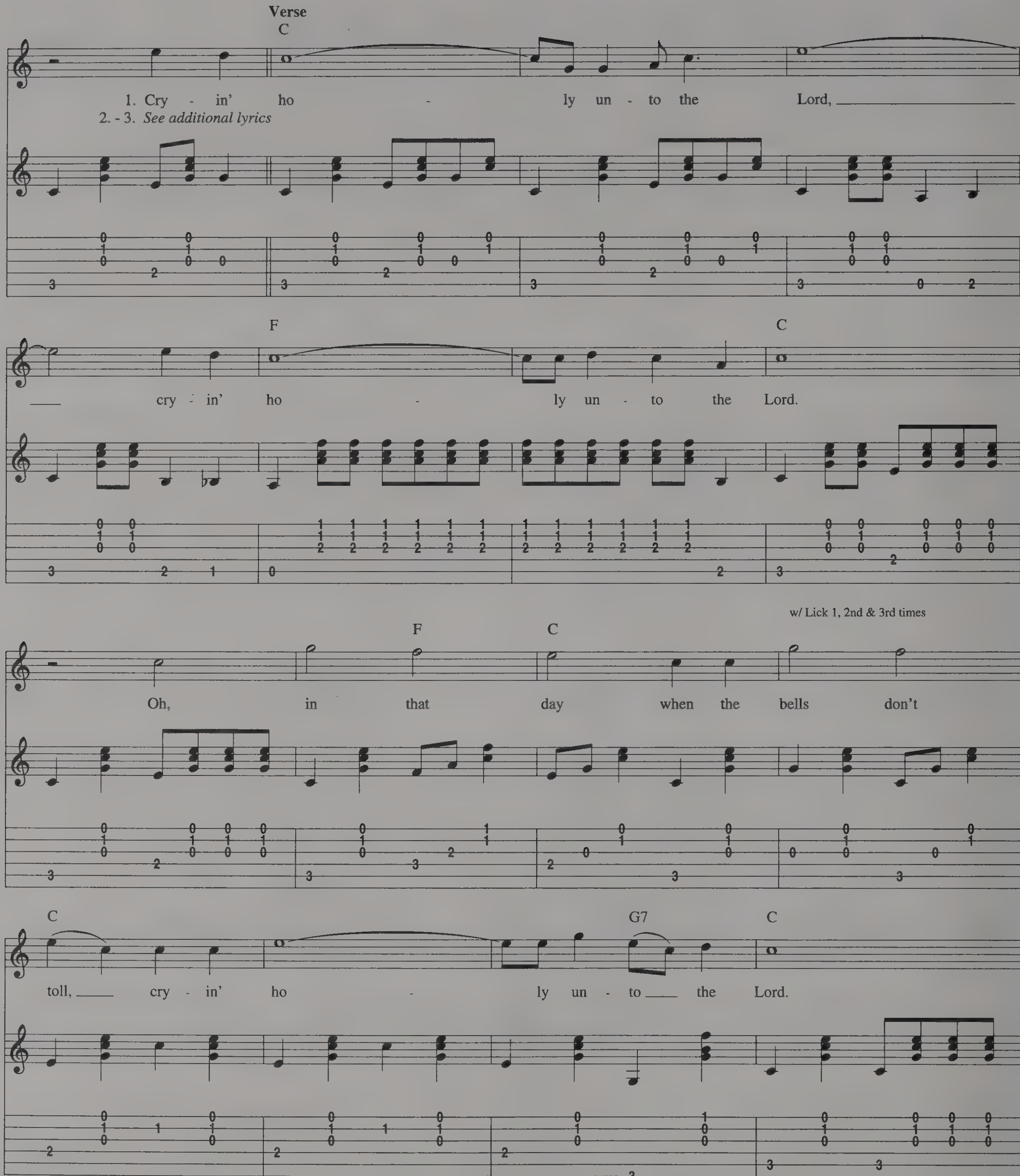
Tuning

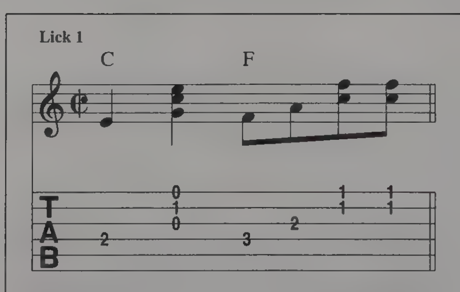
① = D♭ ④ = B

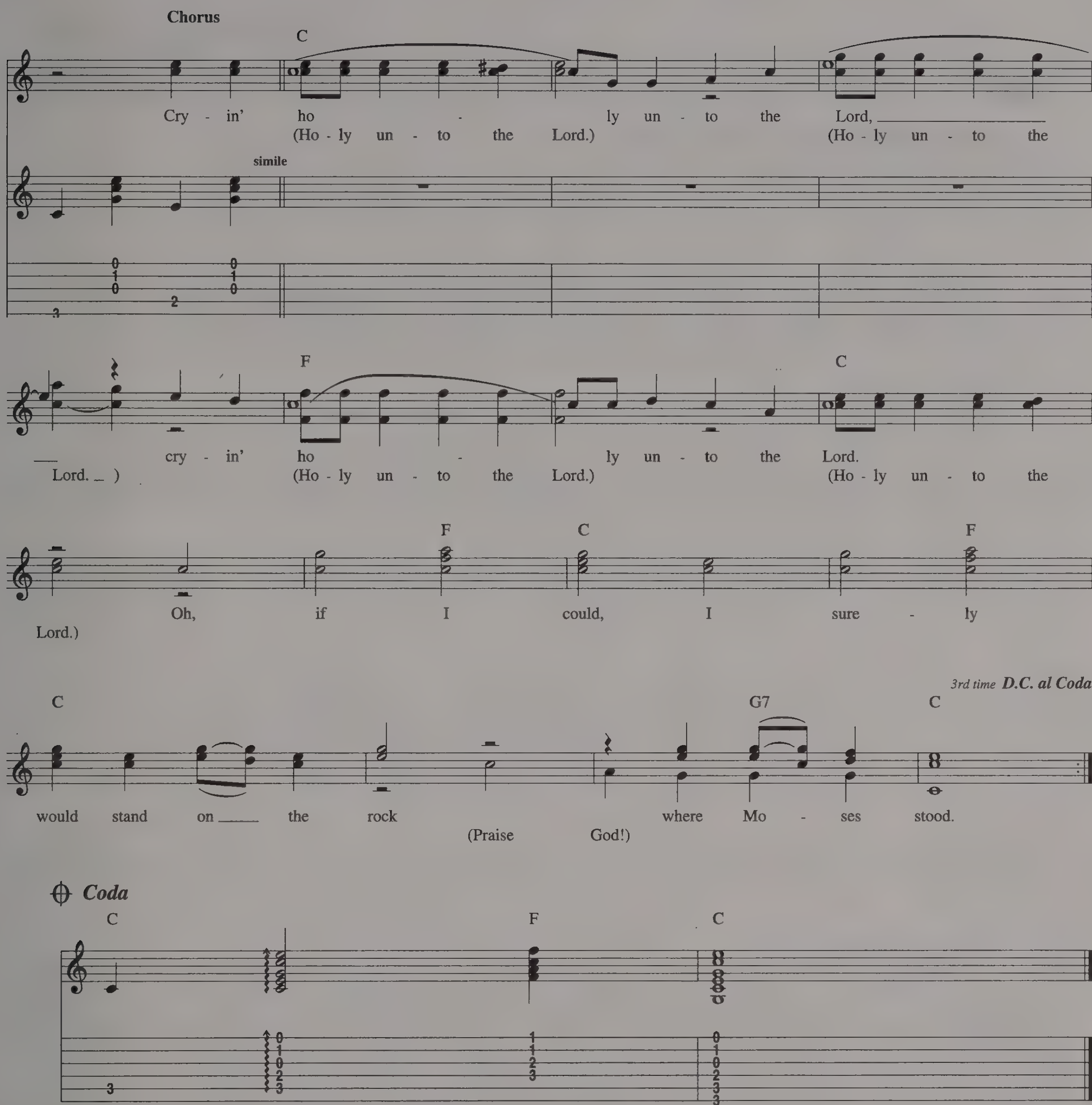
② = A♭ ⑤ = G♭

③ = E ⑥ = D♭




Verse
C
1. Cry - in' ho - ly un - to the Lord,
2. - 3. See additional lyrics
F
C
cry - in' ho - ly un - to the Lord.
w/ Lick 1, 2nd & 3rd times
F
C
Oh, in that day when the bells don't
C
G7
C
toll, cry - in' ho - ly un - to the Lord.


Lick 1
C
F
TAB



Additional Lyrics

2. Sinners, run unto the Lord, sinners, run unto the Lord.
   Now please don't let this parable pass and lose your soul at last.

3. Crying holy unto the Lord, crying holy unto the Lord.
   The four and twenty elders bowing all around the altar, crying holy unto the Lord.

First Charlotte Sessions
Charlotte, North Carolina
May 25, 1931

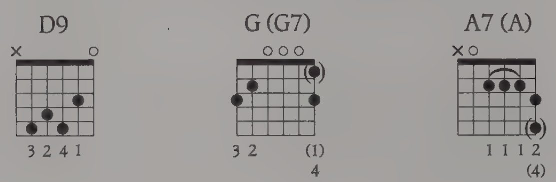
Lonesome for You

Words and Music by Wilf Carter

"Lonesome For You" is one of seven songs the Carters recorded in Charlotte, North Carolina on May 25, 1931. A.P. and Sara alternated singing verses, and Maybelle fingerpicked in the same raggy blues style she used in "The Cannonball." Flatt and Scruggs recorded a simnilar tune in the late 1950s called "I Know What It Means to be Lonesome." The chord progression is shared by many string band favorites, including "Salty Dog" and "Don't Let Your Deal Go Down."

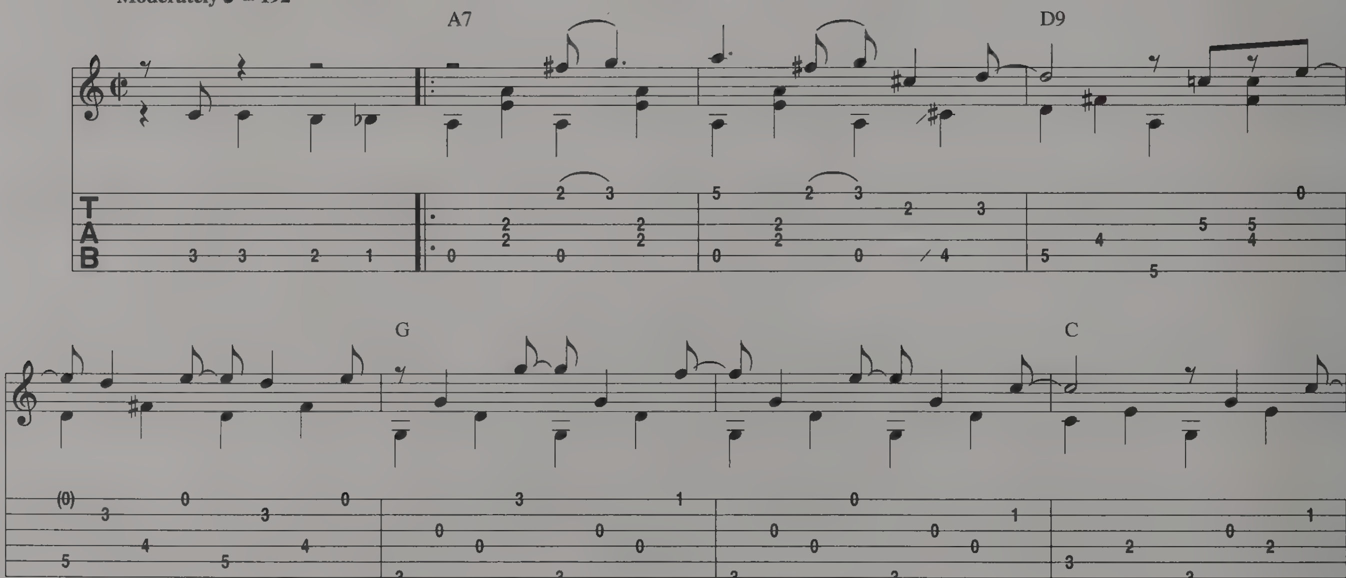
At the end of the Charlotte session, Ralph Peer told the Carters that in two weeks they were to meet his other Bristol session's discovery, Jimmie Rodgers. On June 10– 12, 1931, the Carters recorded two songs and two "skits" in Louisville, Kentucky, with the other Victor superstar. Although record companies were hard hit by the Depression, this historic coupling sold well for Victor. Rodgers was weak from the tuberculosis that would take his life in two years, so Maybelle played for him, imitating his guitar style.

Maybelle's arrangement of "Lonesome For You" included a D9, a G that turns into a G7 and an A7 that turns into an A:

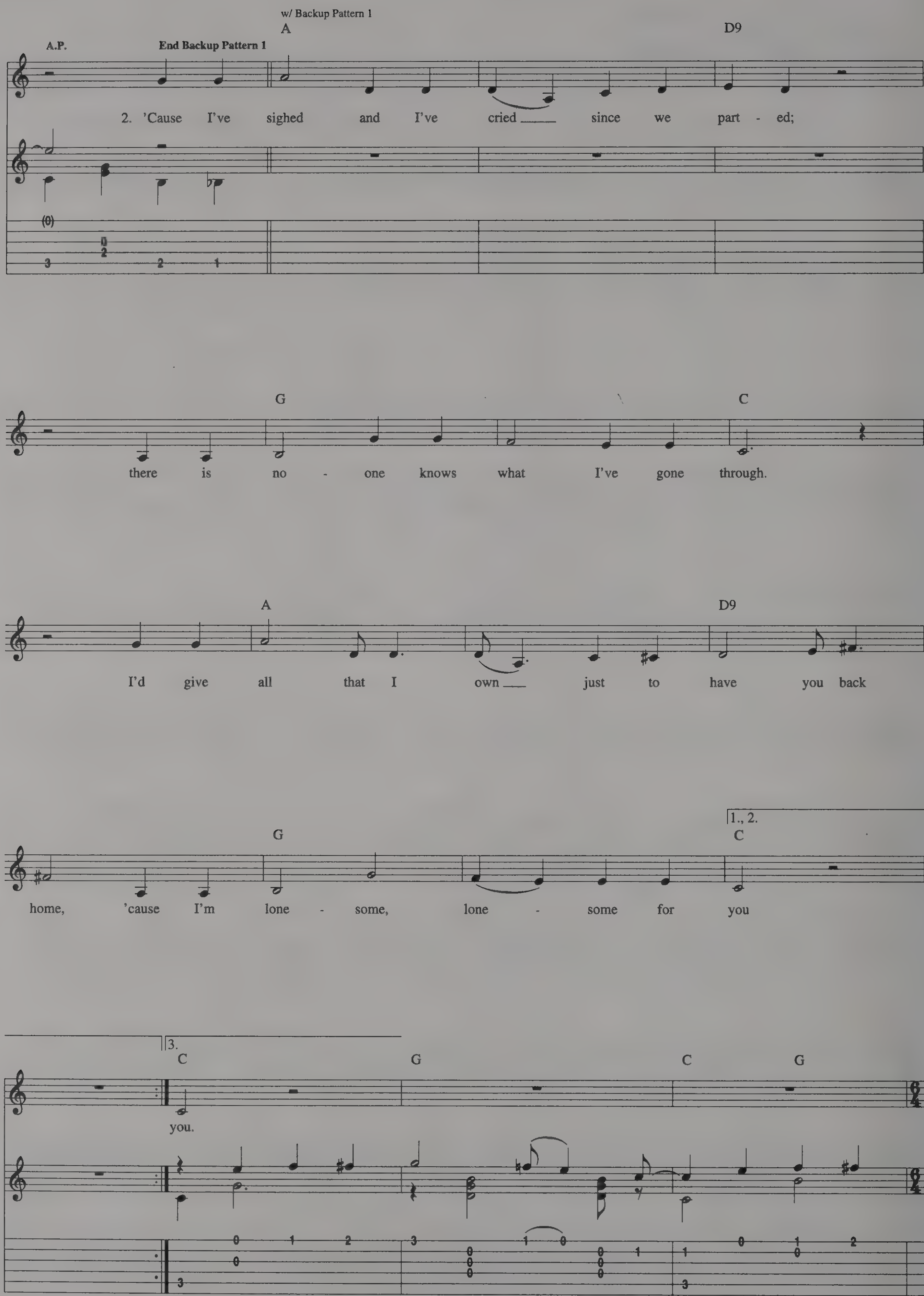


Tuned down 1 fret
(1) = E♭ (4) = D♭
(2) = B♭ (5) = A♭
(3) = G♭ (6) = E♭

Solo
Moderately ♩ = 192




Verse
A
D9
Sara
Backup Pattern 1
1. Now I know what it means to be lone - some
2. - 6. See Additional Lyrics
G
C
and I know what it means to be blue.
A
D9
And I know what it means to be lone - some in
G
C
dreams when there's some - one miss - ing you.


w/ Backup Pattern 1
A.P.
End Backup Pattern 1
A
D9
2. 'Cause I've sighed and I've cried since we part - ed;
G
C
there is no - one knows what I've gone through.
A
D9
I'd give all that I own just to have you back
1., 2.
G
C
home, 'cause I'm lone - some, lone - some for you
3.
C
G
C
G
you.





Additional Lyrics

3. My best friend left me this morning as the clock was striking four,
   and the smiling face of my darling I may not see no more.

4. Now I know what it means to be worried, to be all lonesome and blue,
   for the one that I love so dearly has turned her back on me.

5. Oh, my mind is full of sorrow and my heart is filled with pain,
   and I feel so brokenhearted. Won't you please come back again?

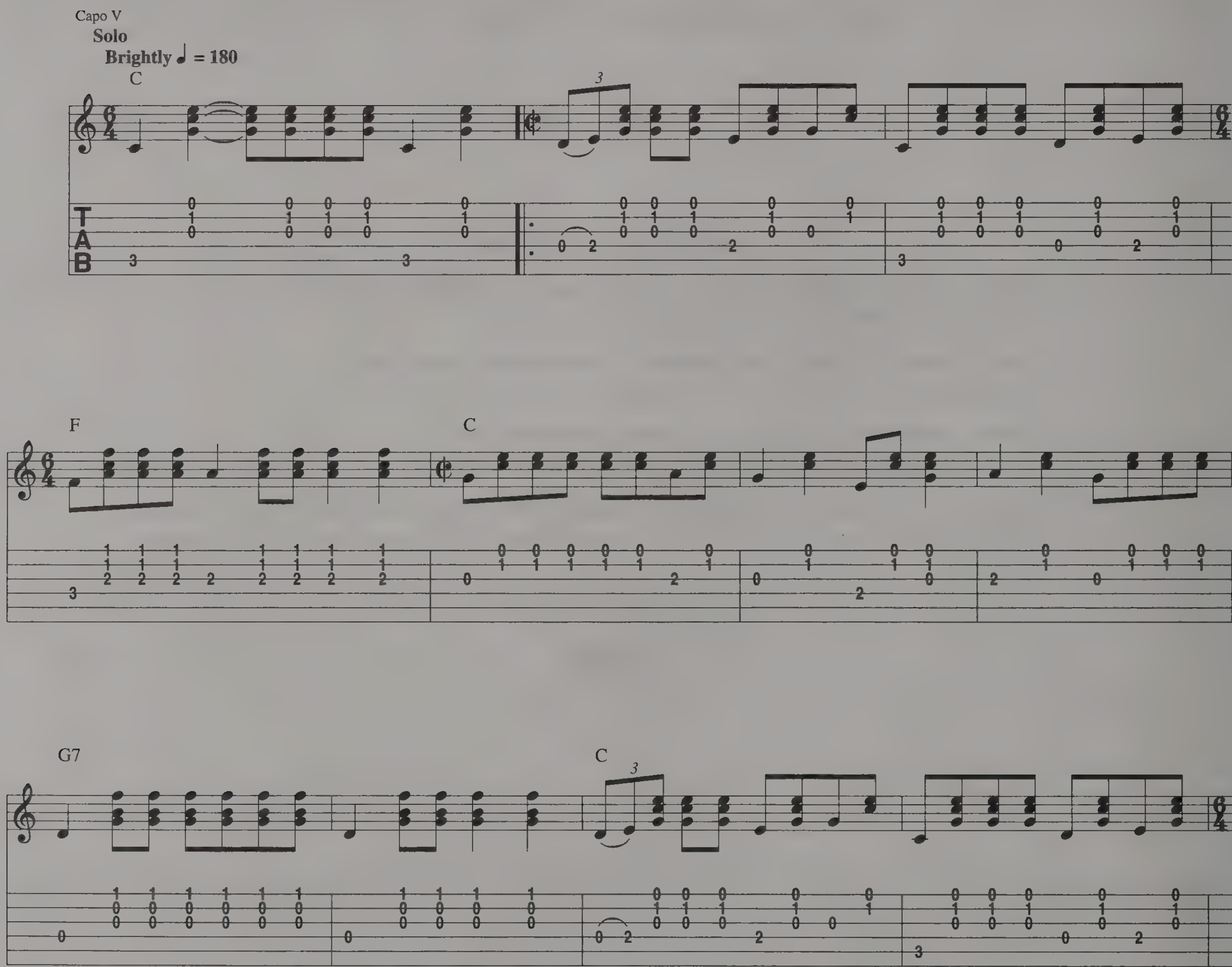
6. 'Cause I've sighed and I've cried since we parted.There is no one knows what I've gone through.
   I'd give all that I own just to have you back home. Mama, I'm lonesome and homesick for you.

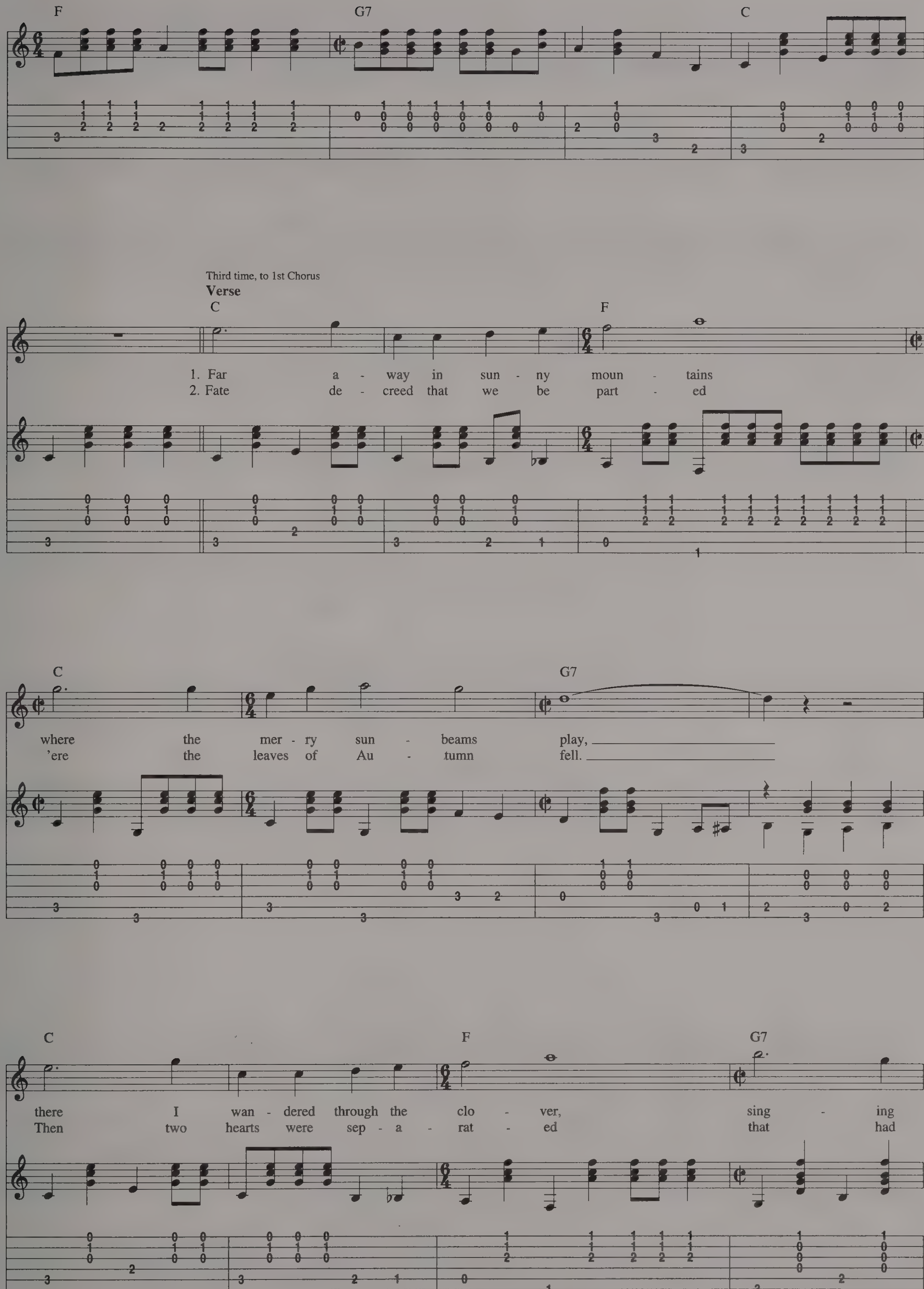
Amber Tresses

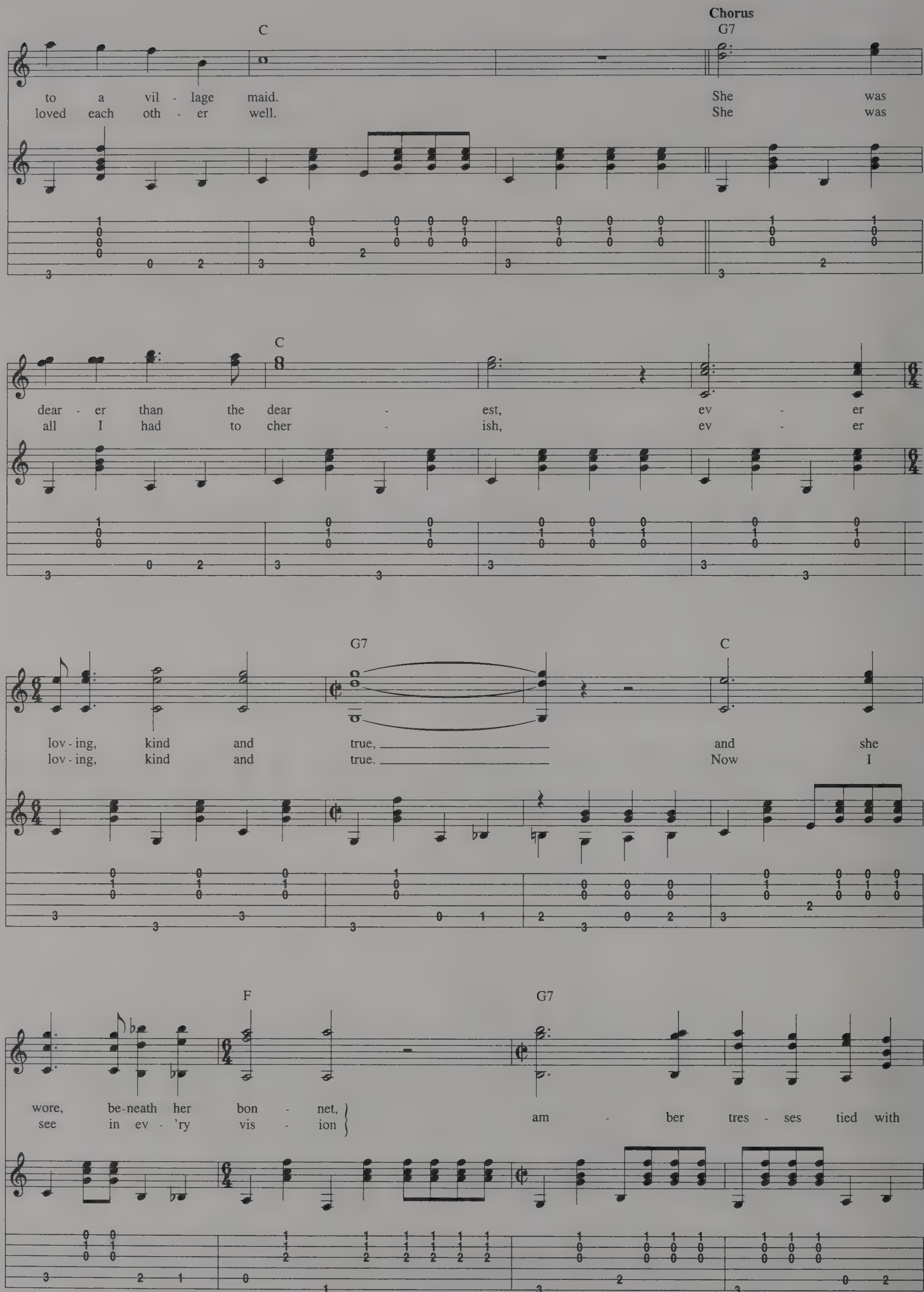
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

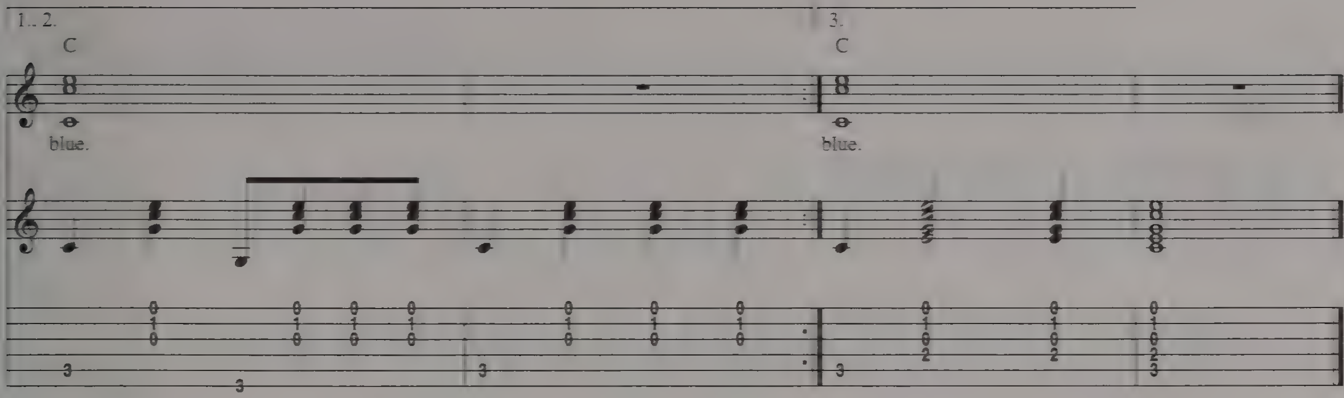
On February 23 and 24 of 1932, the Carter Family recorded eight more songs for Victor at a temporary studio, set up in the Egleston Auditorium in Atlanta Georgia. "Amber Tresses," according to Sara, was a number they "picked up in Russell County [Virginia] from some lady." Flatt and Scruggs recorded it in the early 1960s, including some of the Carters' odd "extra beats."

Besides the "extra beats," the timing of the vocal verse differed from that of Maybelle's instrumental verse.




F G7 C
Third time, to 1st Chorus
Verse
C F
1. Far a - way in sun - ny moun - tains
2. Fate de - creed that we be part - ed
C G7
where the mer - ry sun - beams play,
'ere the leaves of Au - tumn fell.
C F G7
there I wan - dered through the clo - ver, sing - ing
Then two hearts were sep - a - rat - ed that had


Chorus
C
G7
to a vil - lage maid.
loved each oth - er well.
She was
She was
C
dear - er than the dear - est,
all I had to cher - ish,
ev - er
ev - er
G7
C
lov - ing, kind and true,
lov - ing, kind and true.
and she
Now I
F
G7
wore, be-neath her bon - net,
see in ev - 'ry vis - ion
am - ber tres - ses tied with



Additional Lyrics

2. Fate decreed that we be parted e're the leaves of Autumn fell.
Then two hearts were separated that had loved each other well.

Chorus:
She was all I had to cherish, ever-loving, kind and true.
Now I see, in every vision, amber tresses tied with blue.

3. Chorus:
She was dearer than the dearest, ever-loving, kind and true,
and she wore, beneath her bonnet, amber tresses tied with blue.

Winding Stream

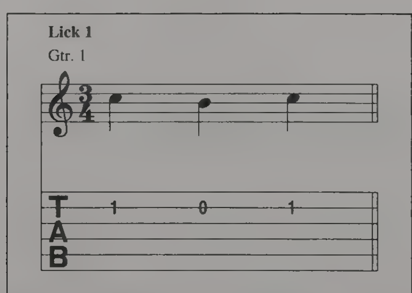
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

The Carters recorded "Winding Stream" on October 13, 1932, on the second day of a two-day session in Camden, New Jersey, at Church Studio #2. They had been sent the lyrics by a fan in British Columbia, and A.P. and the group provided the beautiful, unusual melody. Maybelle's granddaughter, Carlene Carter, later recorded a version.

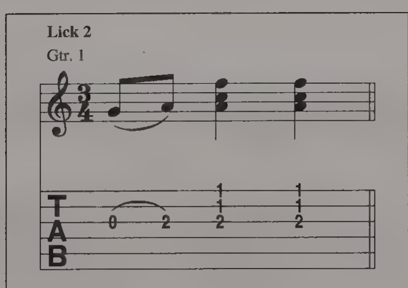
Peer was now the Carters' personal manager, and the band was paid a straight $75 per tune. The Depression had record sales so low that Peer and the Carters thought they might be better off with the per-tune arrangement. Meanwhile, A.P. and Sara had not been getting along, and in 1933 Sara moved out of the cabin A.P. had built for them, taking the children with her. At first, she refused to continue recording with the group, and the next recording session only happened after Ralph Peer's wife, Anita, convinced Sara that even if this separation became permanent, she could work with A.P. "like the movie stars do; practically all of them are divorced or should be." Anita had become close to the Carters and Maybelle had just named a daughter after her.

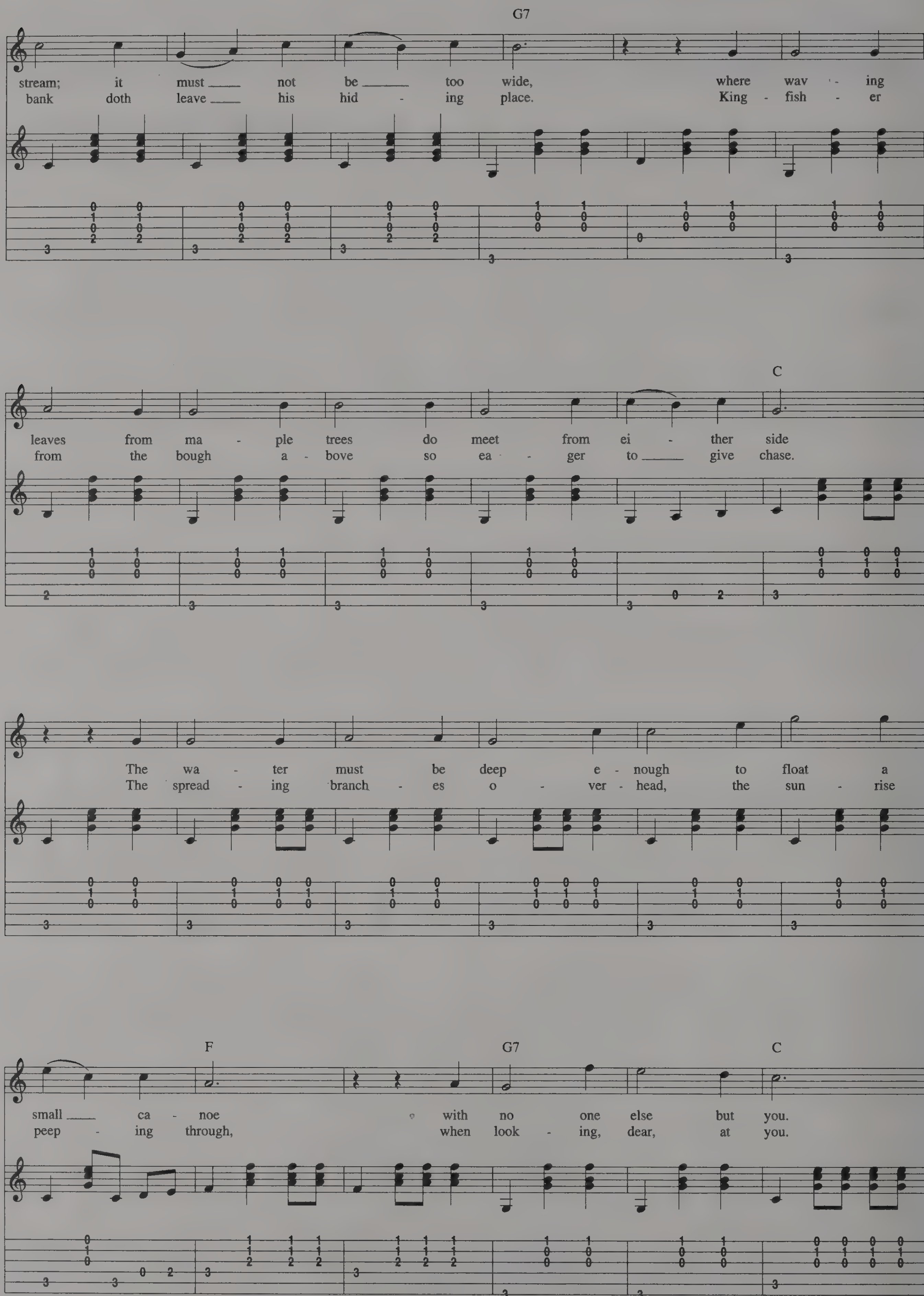
Both Gtrs. tuned down 2 frets
(1) = D (4) = C
(2) = A (5) = G
(3) = F (6) = D

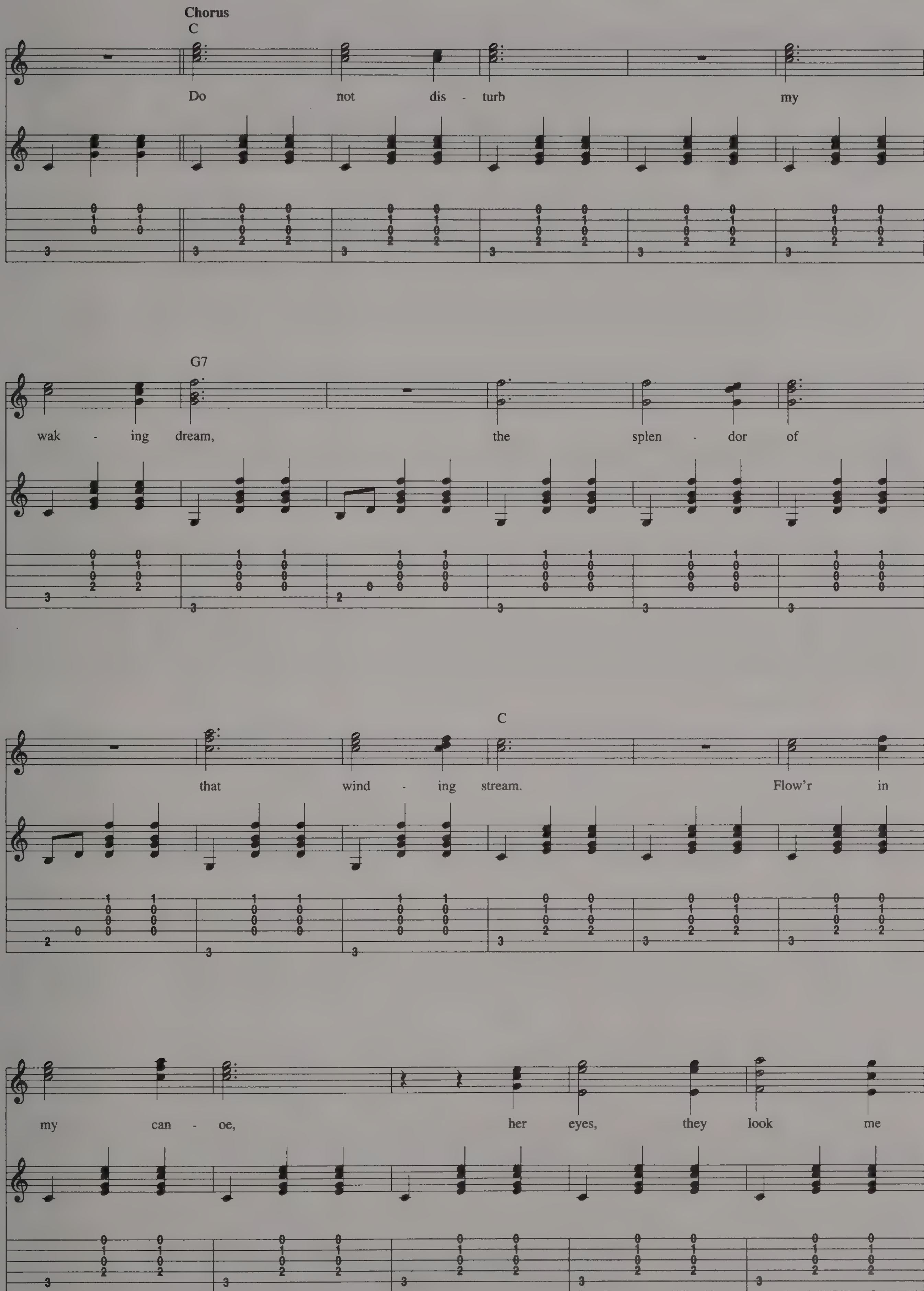




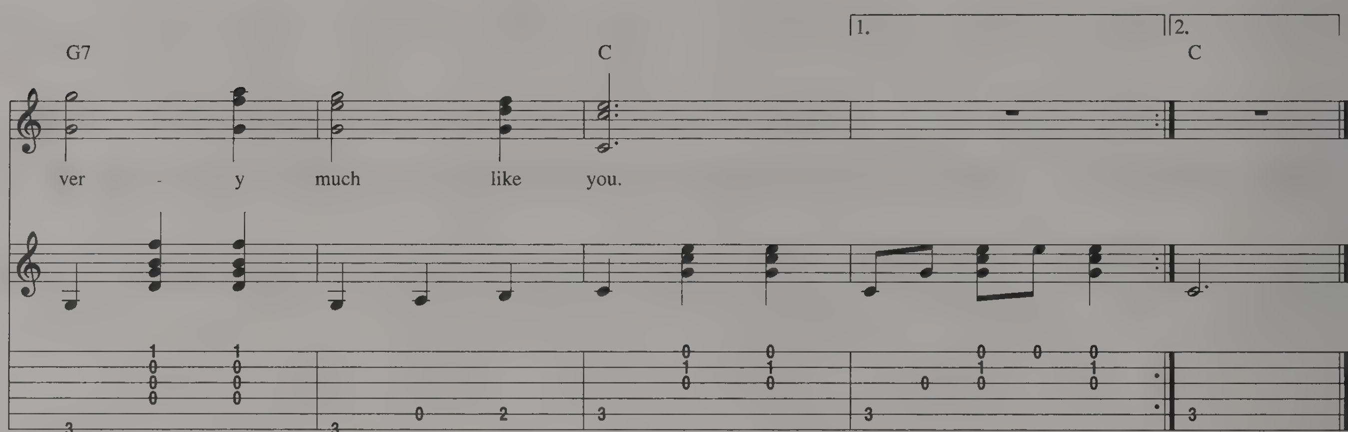

Gtr. 2 simile
Gtr. 1
G7
C
Gtr. 1: w/ Lick 2, 2nd time
F
C
G7
C
Verse
C
1. Oh give to me a wind - ing
2. The spark - ling trout be - neath the


Lick 2
Gtr. 1
TAB


G7
stream; it must not be too wide, where wav - ing
bank doth leave his hid - ing place. King - fish - er
C
leaves from ma - ple trees do meet from ei - ther side
from the bough a - bove so ea - ger to give chase.
The wa - ter must be deep e - nough to float a
The spread - ing branch - es o - ver - head, the sun - rise
F G7 C
small ca - noe with no one else but you.
peep - ing through, when look - ing, dear, at you.


Chorus
C
Do not dis - turb my
wak - ing dream,
G7
the splen - dor of
that wind - ing stream.
C
Flow'r in
my can - oe,
her eyes, they look me


F
through; a maid - en fair with gold - en hair is


1.
2.
G7
C
C
ver - y much like you.

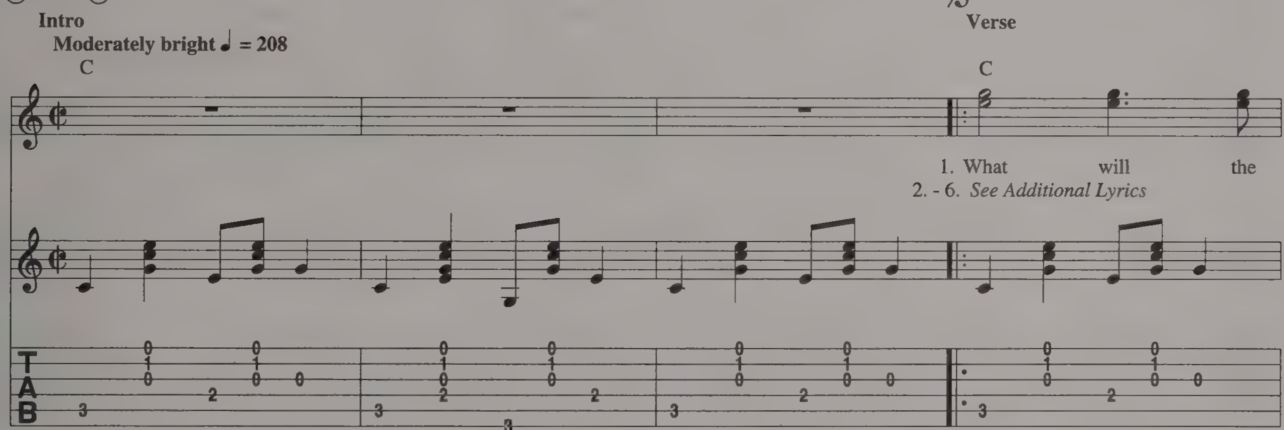
Little Joe (Darling Little Joe)

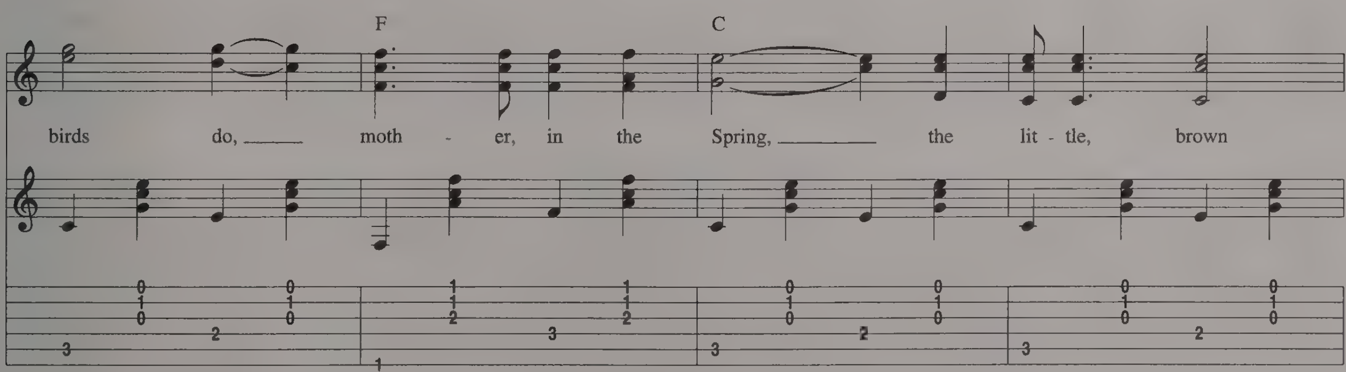
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

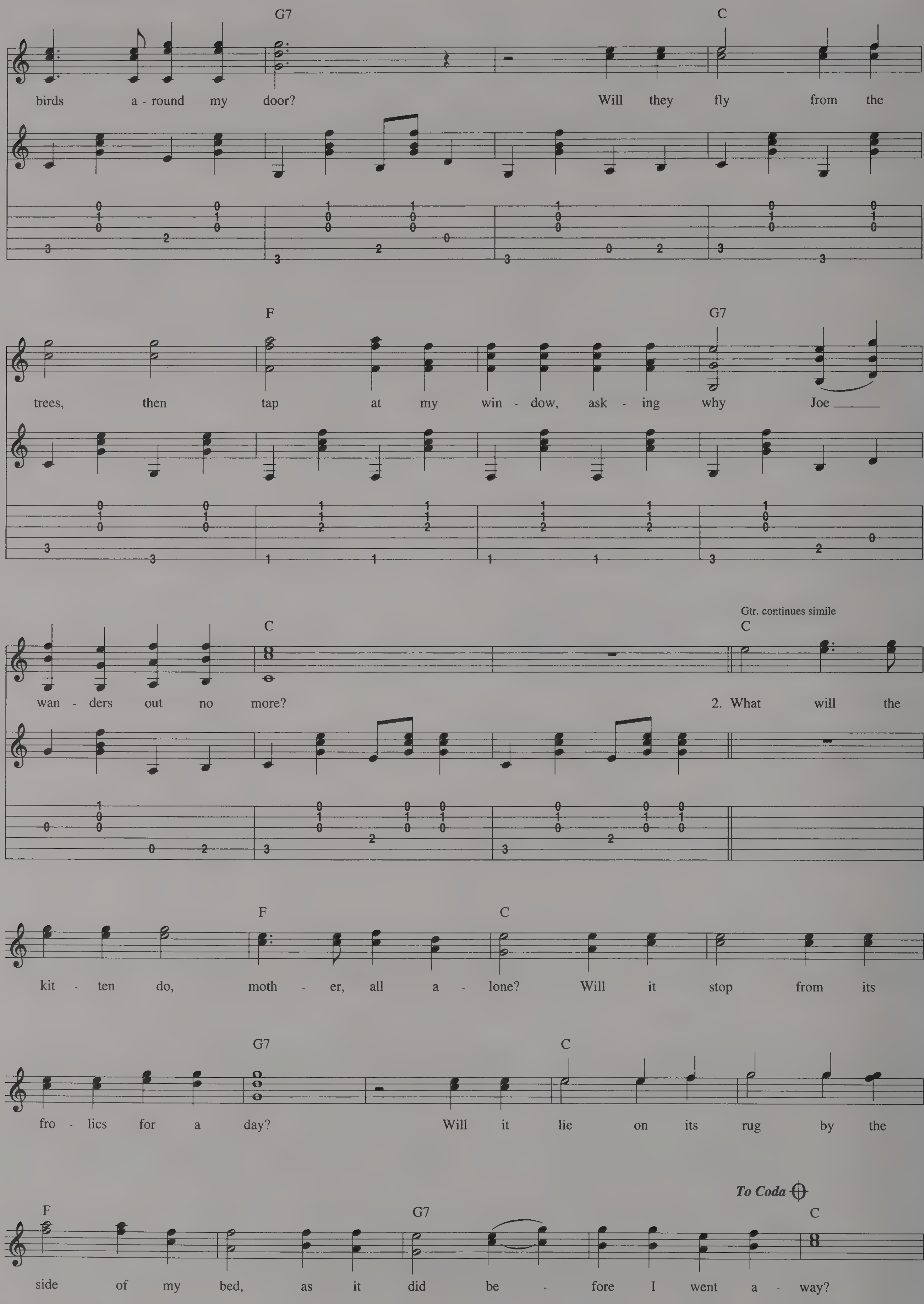
In a marathon session for Victor on May 8, 1934, at Camden, the Carters recorded sixteen songs. At this point their (and nearly everyone else's) record sales were down to a few thousand per release; the "Bluebird Budget Label" had managed to get the cost of their 78s down to 35 cents instead of 75 cents. Even so, the Carters were earning enough from performances and royalties that they were finally more than comfortable, especially in a depressed area like the hills of Virginia; their children sometimes gave money to their schoolmates.

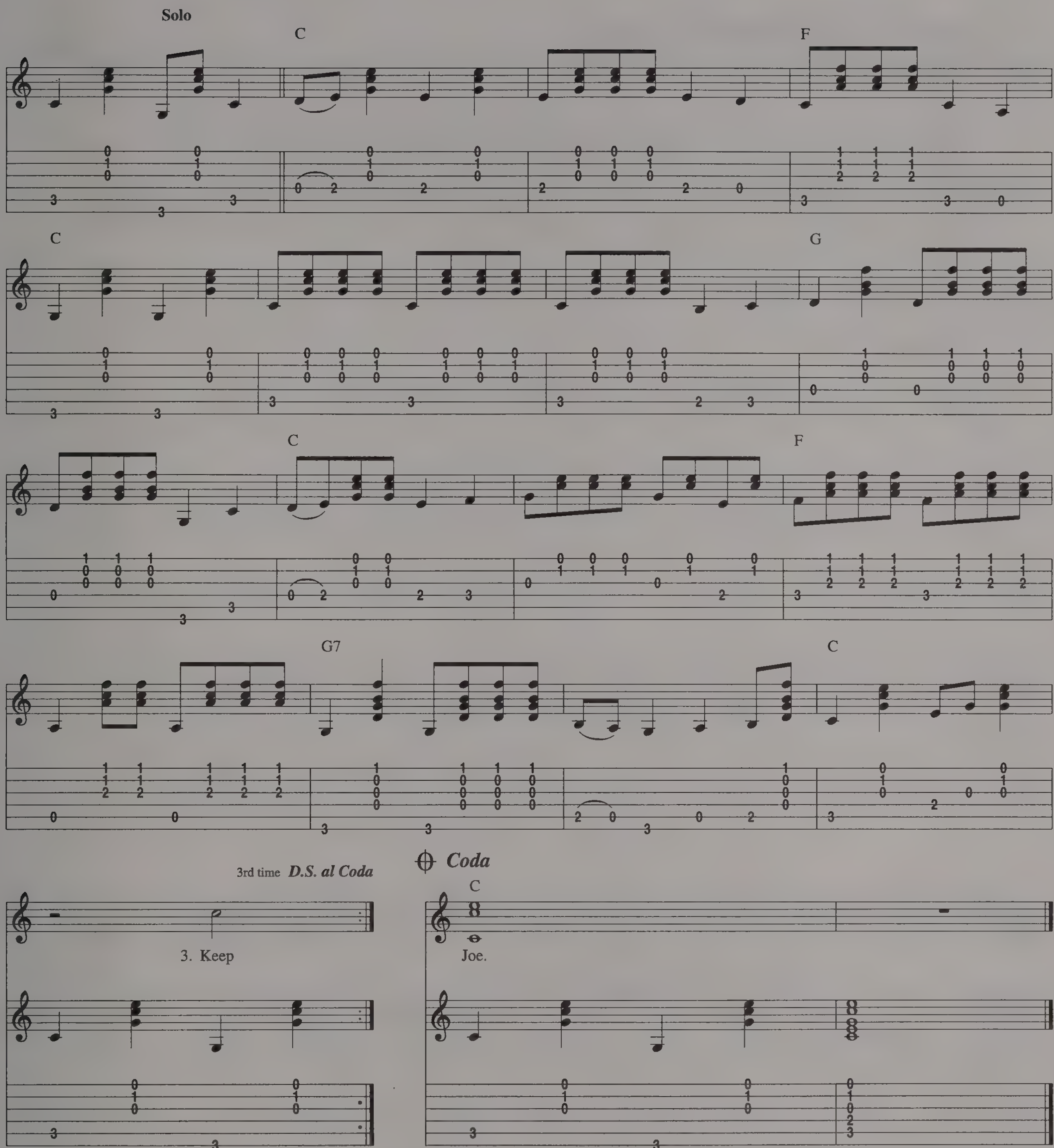
"Little Joe" a tear-jerker of the "dying child" genre, was inspired by a number that pre-World War I country singer Bradley Kincaid used to sing on the radio. The Carters' version became a bluegrass standard and was recorded by Norman Blake, Bill Monroe, Red Sovine, the Stanley Brothers, and others.

Tuning
① = B ④ = A
② = F♯ ⑤ = E
③ = D ⑥ = B






G7
C
birds a - round my door? Will they fly from the
F
G7
trees, then tap at my win - dow, ask - ing why Joe
C
Gtr. continues simile
C
wan - ders out no more? 2. What will the
F
C
kit - ten do, moth - er, all a - lone? Will it stop from its
G7
C
fro - lics for a day? Will it lie on its rug by the
To Coda
F
G7
C
side of my bed, as it did be - fore I went a - way?



Additional Lyrics

2. What will the kitten do, mother, all alone, will it stop from its frolics for a day?
   Will it lie on its rug by the side of my bed as it did before I went away?

3. Keep Tige, dearest mother, my poor little dog, I know that he'll mourn for me too.
   Keep him when old and useless he grows, sleeping all the long summer through.

4. Show him my coat, mother, so he'll not forget little master who will then be dead.
   Speak to him kindly and often of Joe, and pat him on his shaggy head.

5. What will Thomas, the old gardener say, when you ask him for a flower for me?
   Will he give you a rose he has tended with care, the first, fairest bloom of the tree?

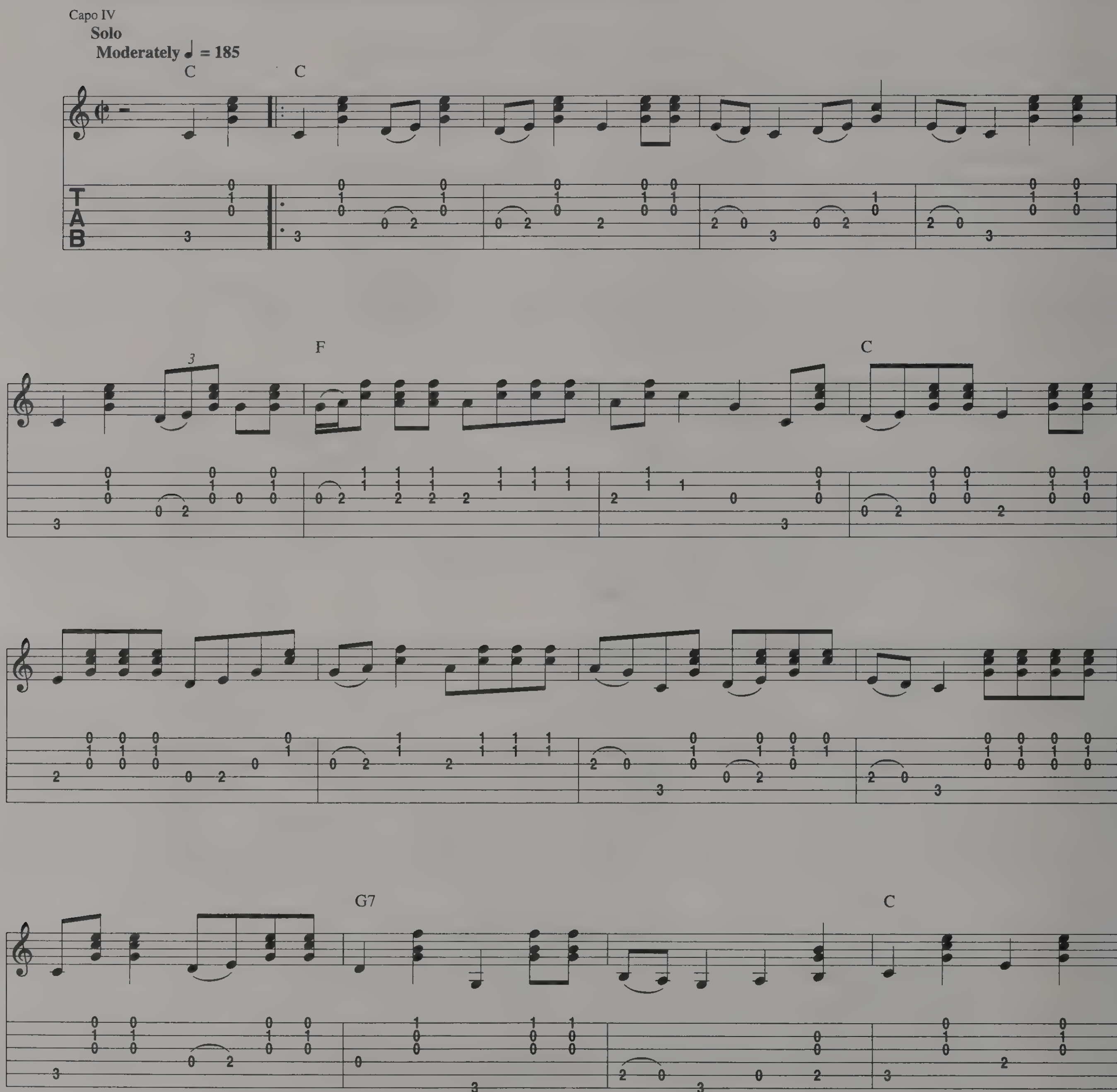
6. And you, dearest mother, will miss me for a while, 'though in heaven I'll no larger grow.
   Any kind angel will tell you at the gate when you ask for your darling little Joe.

East Virginia Blues

Words and Music by A.P. Carter

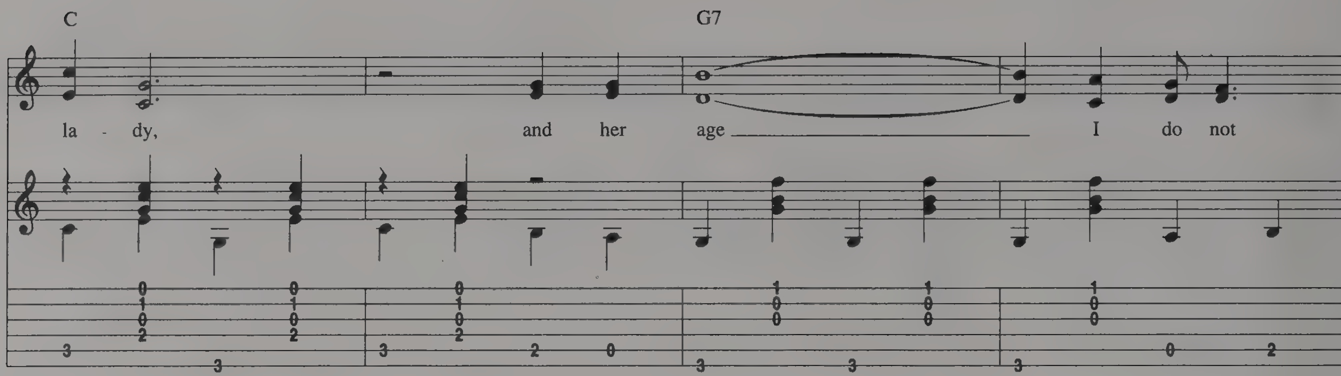
The Carters recorded "East Virginia Blues" during the long Camden session of 1934. A.P. worked up an arrangement of the old folk tune, which goes back to 17th century England. In 1928, banjo player/guitarist/singer Clarence Ashley recorded a similar tune, "Dark Holler Blues," and later in the 1930s both tunes morphed into the popular "Greenback Dollar" (not the 1963 Kingston Trio song). This hit began "I don't want your greenback dollar" and gave rise to an "Answer to Greenback Dollar" and, in the 1940s, a labor song called "I Don't Want Your Millions Mister."

Maybelle's introductory solo is a study in hammer-ons and pull-offs.




Verse
C
1. I was born in East Vir - gin - ia.
2. - 4. See Additional Lyrics
w/ Lick 1, other times
F
C
North Car - 'li - na I did go
F
There I spy a fair young


Lick 1
C
F
TAB





Additional Lyrics

2. Her hair was dark in color, her cheeks were rosy red.
   Upon her breast, she wore white lilies, where I longed to lay my head.

3. Oh, at my heart you are my darlin', at my door you're welcome in.
   At my gate I'll always meet you, for you're the girl I tried to win.

4. I'd rather be in some dark holler, where the sun refuse to shine,
   than for you to be another man's darlin' and to know you'll never be mine.

Can the Circle Be Unbroken

Words and Music by A.P. Carter

In 1935, the Carters cut forty songs for the American Record Corporation (ARC). Half of these were repeat performances of songs they had done for Victor, but the other half included some important "new" tunes.

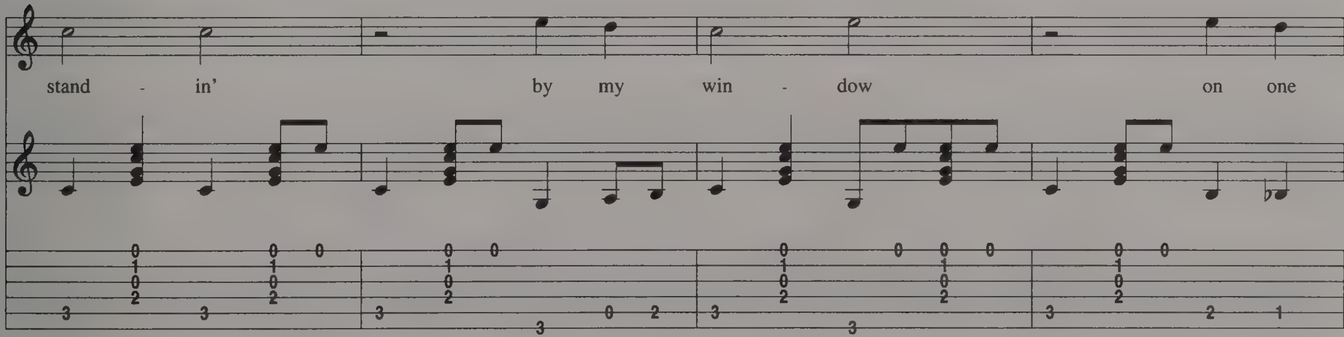
"Can the Circle Be Unbroken,"* recorded May 6, 1935 in New York City, is the type of country anthem that is played often as a set closer when several country stars perform on the same bill. The varied group of artists who have recorded this gospel standard includes Johnny Cash, Joe Cocker, The Country Gentlemen, Delaney and Bonnie, Dr. John, John Lee Hooker, George Jones, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, the Staples Singers and Red Foley. A. P.'s stark, down-to-earth verses about the death of a parent provide a strong contrast to the uplifting message of the chorus, which was inspired by an old hymn.

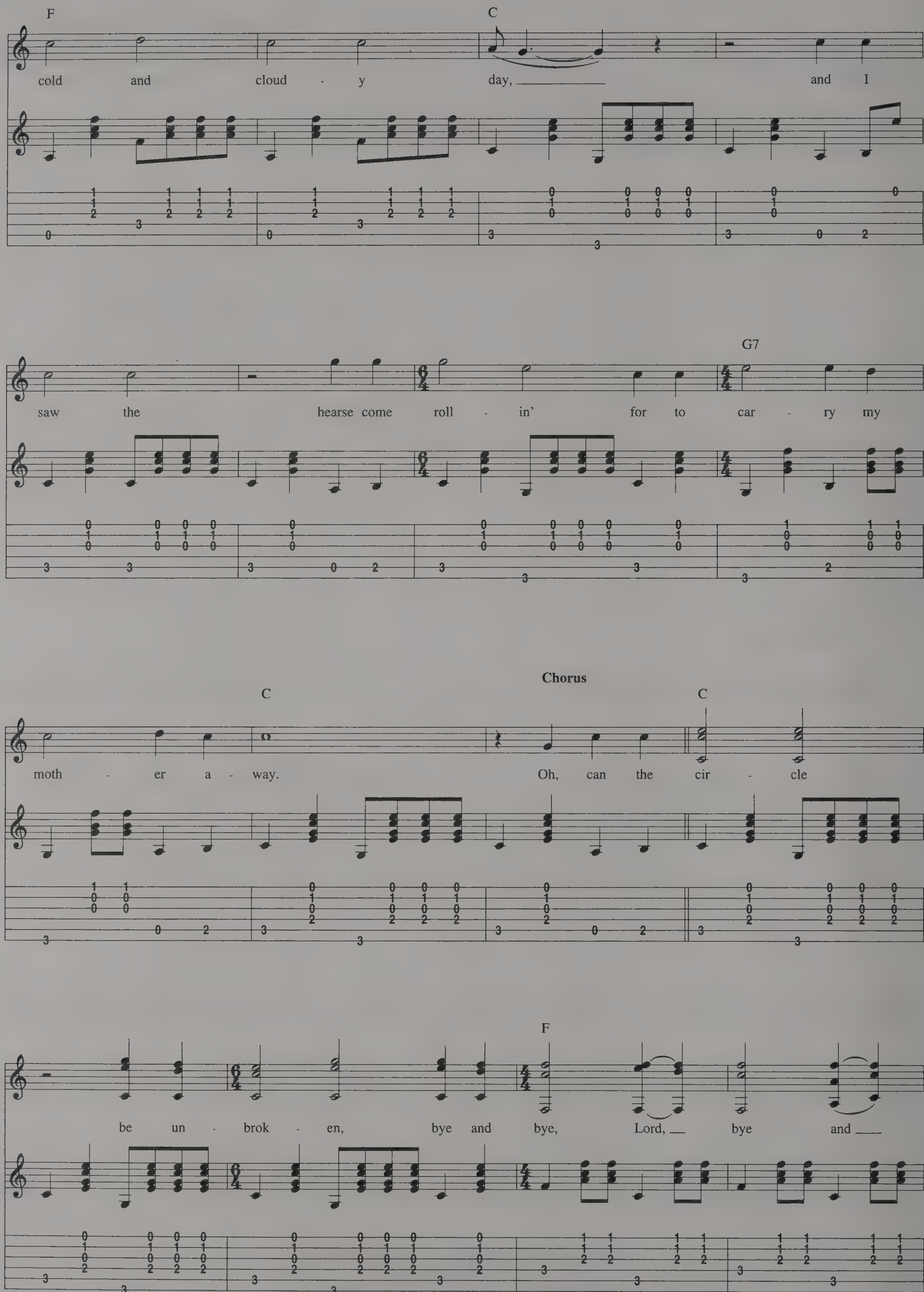
As in "Amber Tresses Tied With Blue," the Carters added several "extra" beats when they sang "Circle," and Maybelle kept some of them and lost others during her solo.

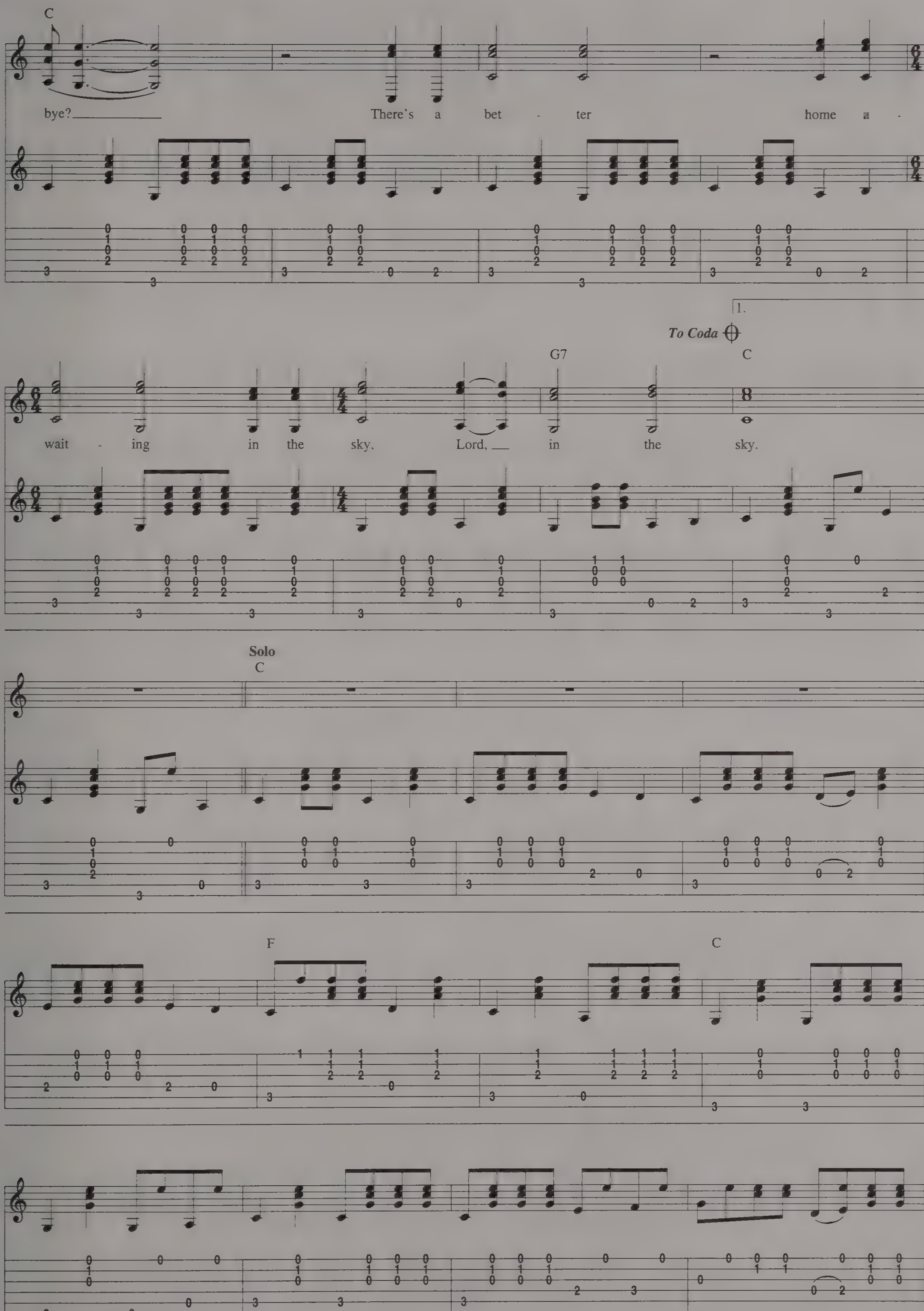
*"Can" instead of "Will" was the title in the Carters' first recording of the song.

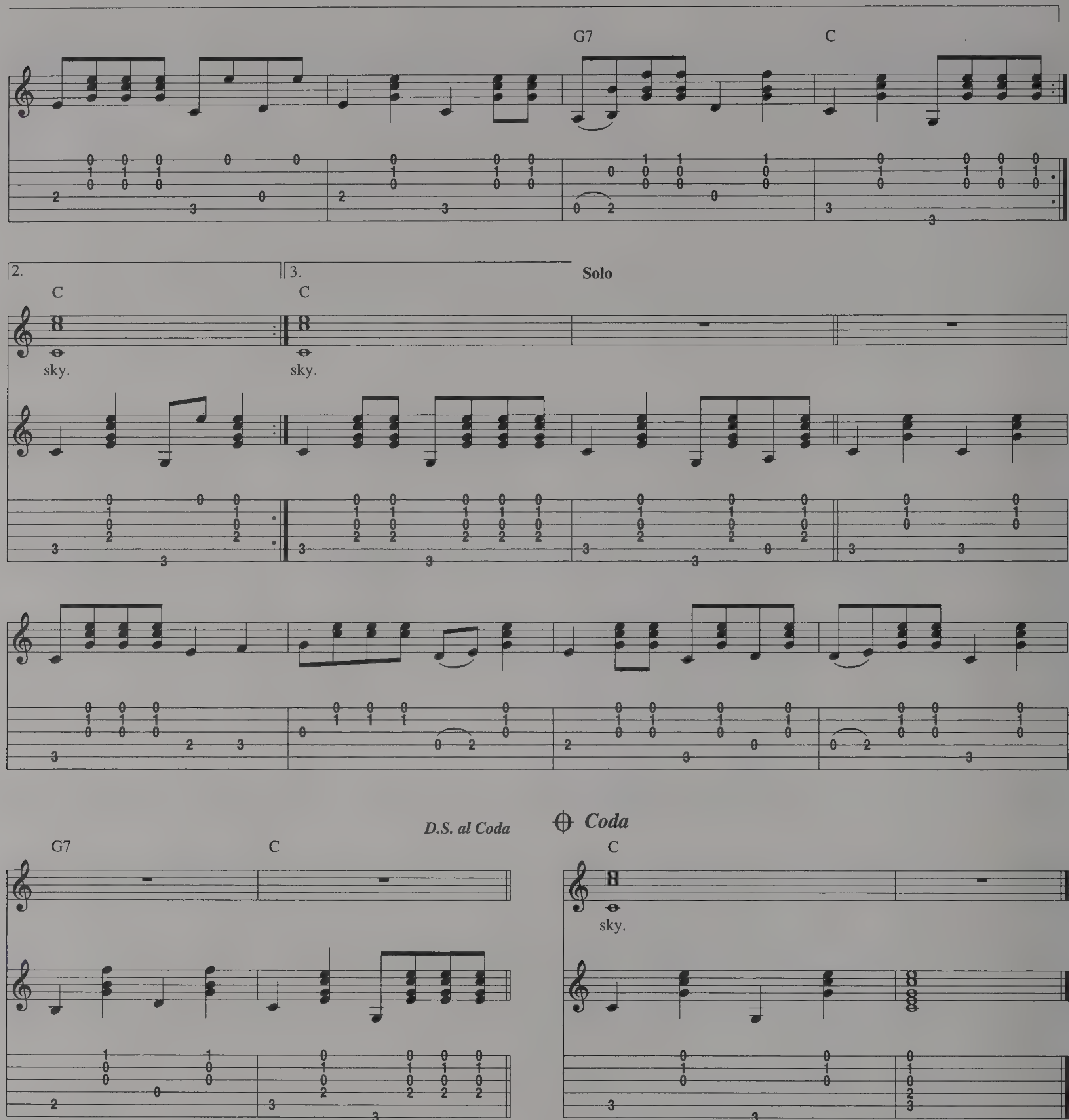
Tune down 4 frets
(1) = C (4) = B♭
(2) = G (5) = F
(3) = E♭ (6) = C






F
cold and cloud - y
C
day, ___ and I
saw the hearse come roll - in' for to
G7
car - ry my
moth - er a - way.
C
Chorus
Oh, can the
C
cir - cle
be un - brok - en, bye and
F
bye, Lord, ___ bye and ___


C
bye?
There's a bet - ter home a -
1.
To Coda
G7
C
wait - ing in the sky. Lord, in the sky.
Solo
C
F
C



Additional Lyrics

2. I told the undertaker, "Undertaker, please drive slow,
for this body you are hauling, Lord, I hate to see her go." (Chorus)

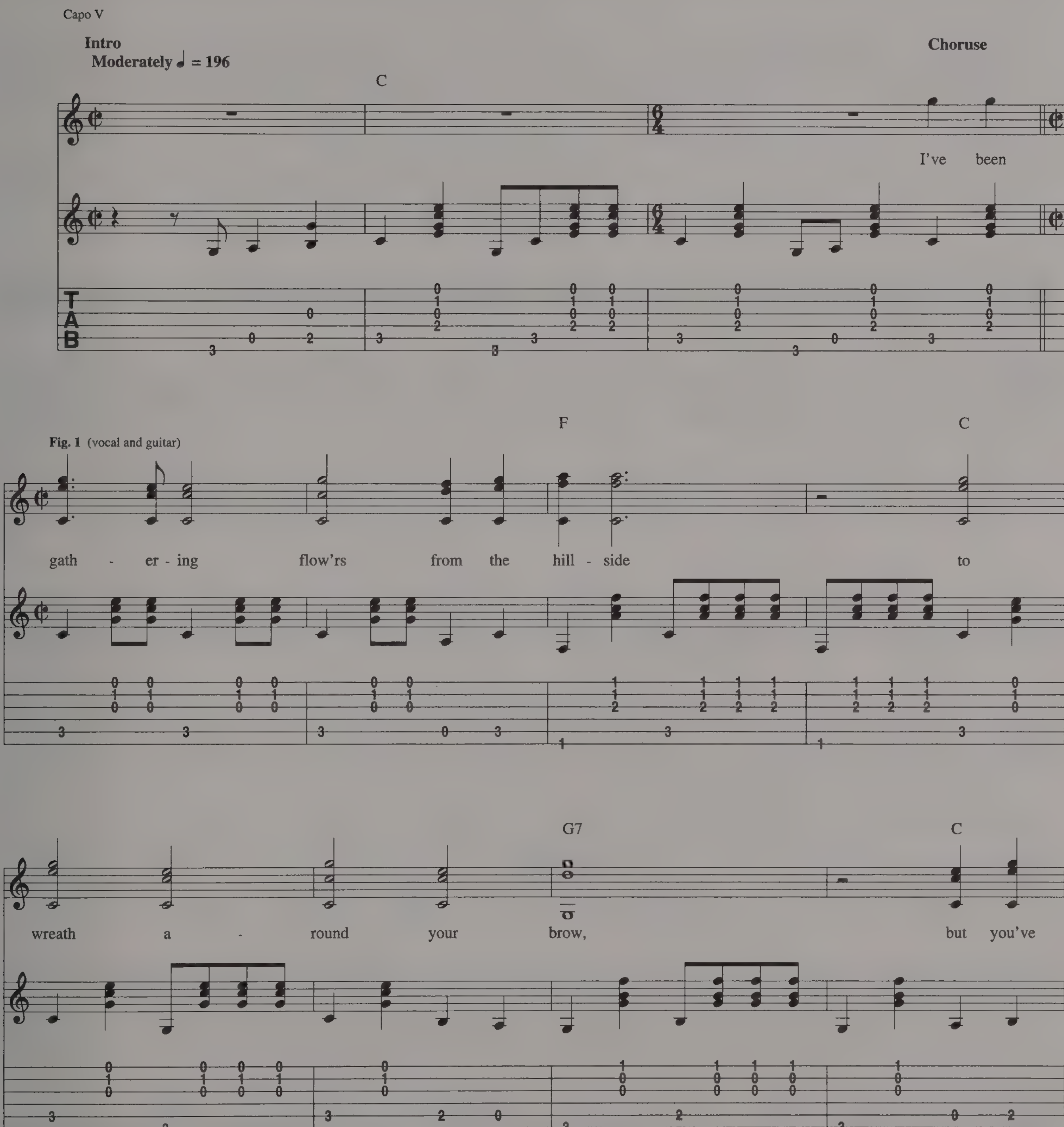
3. Lord, I followed close behind her, tried to hold up and be brave.
But I could not hide my sorrow when they laid her in the grave. (Chorus)

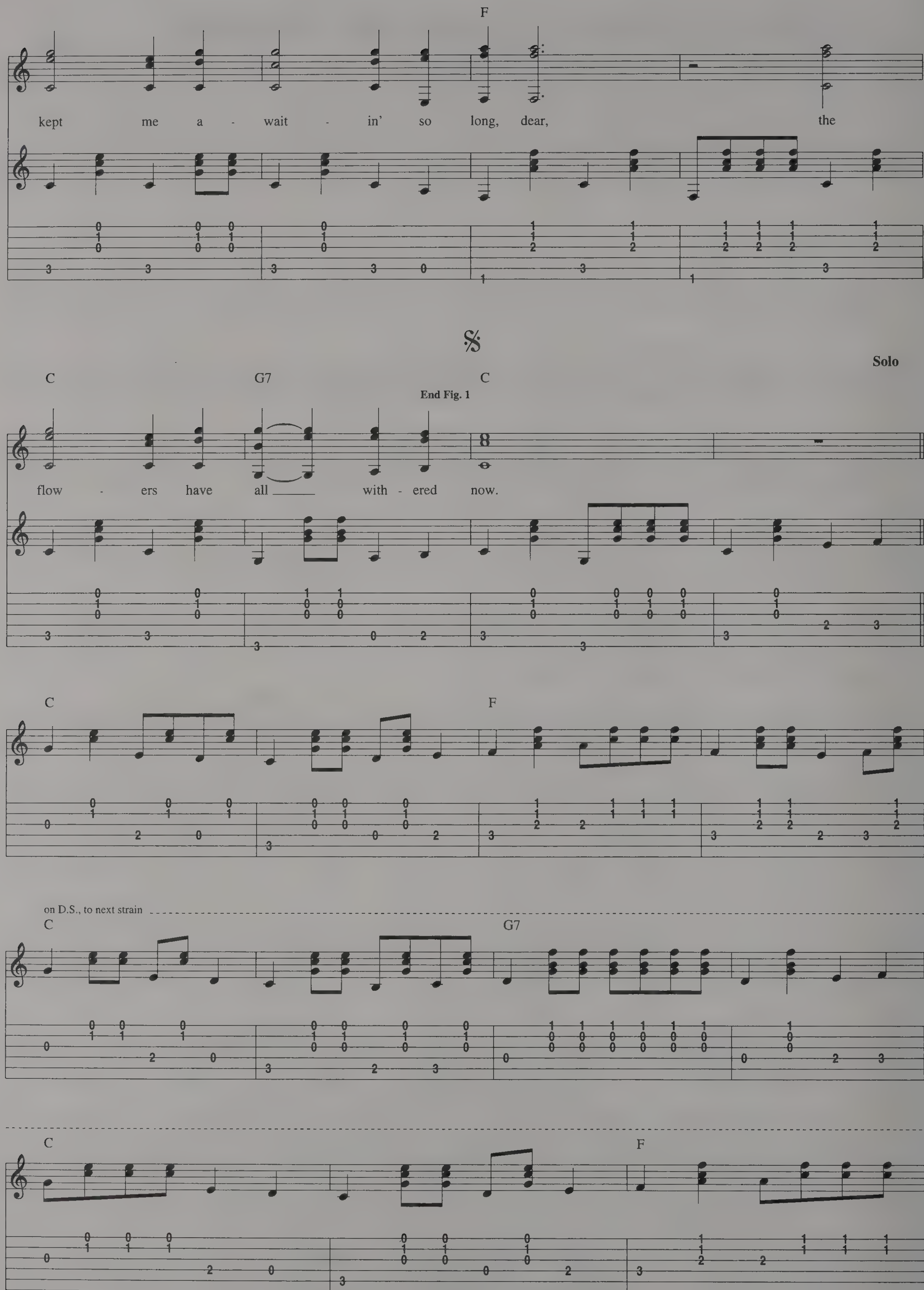
4. Went back home, Lord, my home was lonesome, since my mother, she was gone.
All my brothers, sisters cryin', what a home so sad and 'lone. (Chorus)

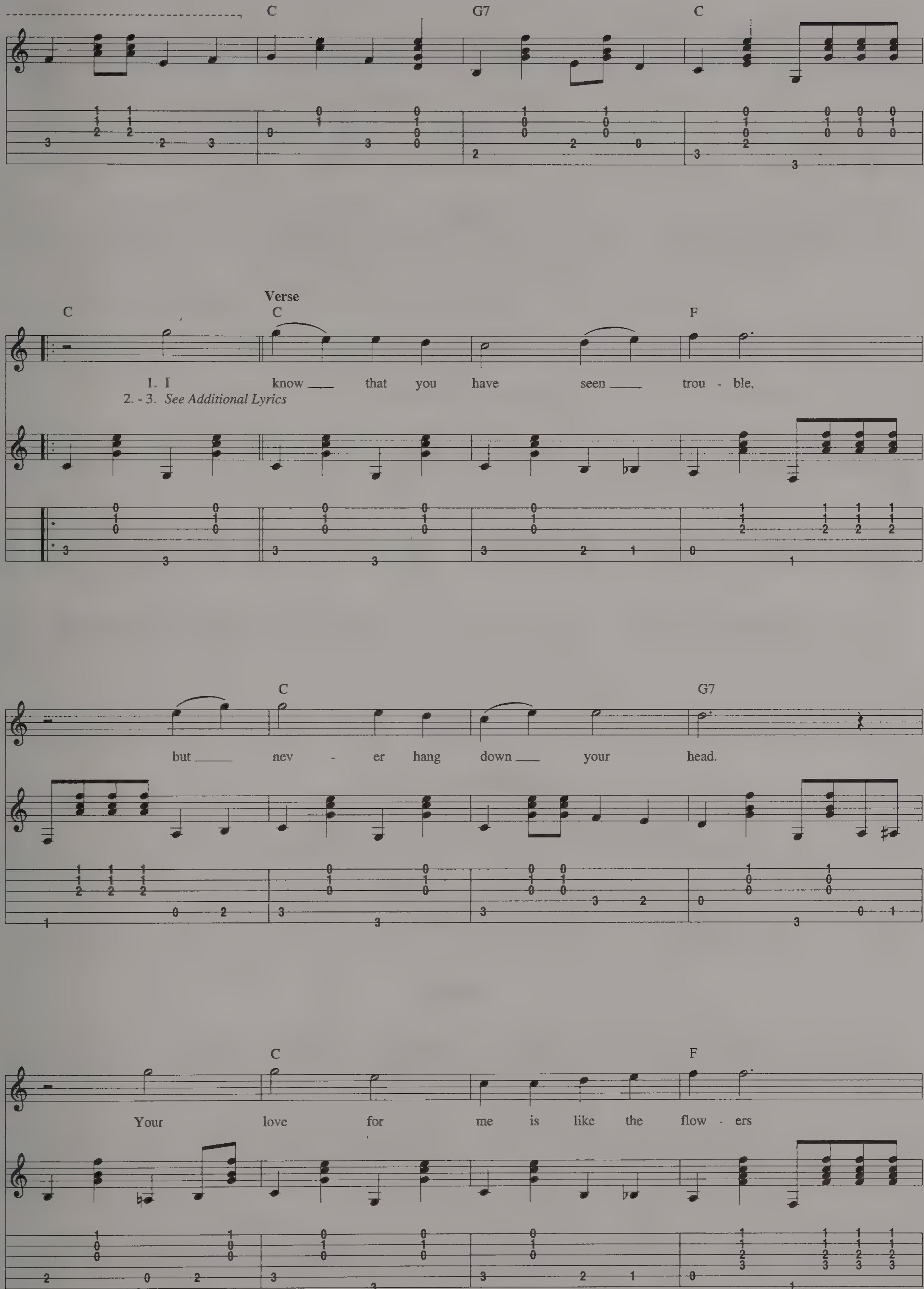
Gathering Flowers From the Hillside

Words and Music by A.P. Carter, Maybelle Carter and Sara Carter

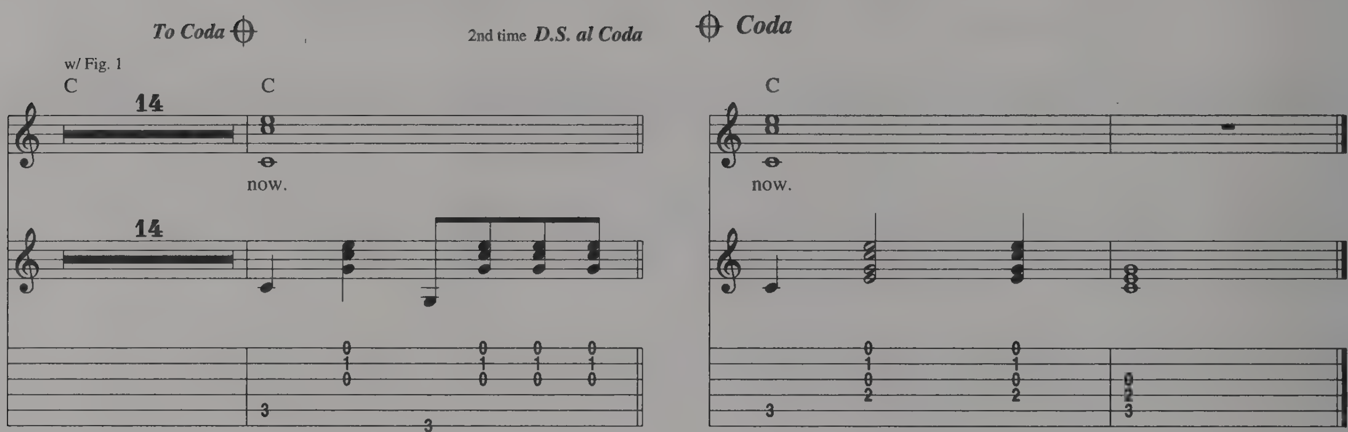
The Carters recorded "Gathering Flowers From the Hillside" the day after "Can the Circle be Unbroken." In the early 1960s, Maybelle played an instrumental version on autoharp, swapping solos with Earl Scruggs on a Flatt and Scruggs "Tribute to the Carter Family" album.




F
kept me a - wait - in' so long, dear, the
C
G7
End Fig. 1
C
Solo
flow - ers have all ___ with - ered now.
C
F
on D.S., to next strain
C
G7
C
F


C
G7
C
C
Verse
C
F
1. I know ___ that you have seen ___ trou - ble,
2. - 3. See Additional Lyrics
C
G7
but ___ nev - er hang down ___ your head.
C
F
Your love for me is like the flow - ers





Additional Lyrics

2. It was on one bright June morning, the roses were in bloom,
   I shot and killed my darling, and what will be my doom?
   (Chorus)

3. Closed eyes cannot see these roses, closed hands cannot hold them, you know,
   and these lips that still cannot kiss me have gone from me forevermore.
   (Chorus)

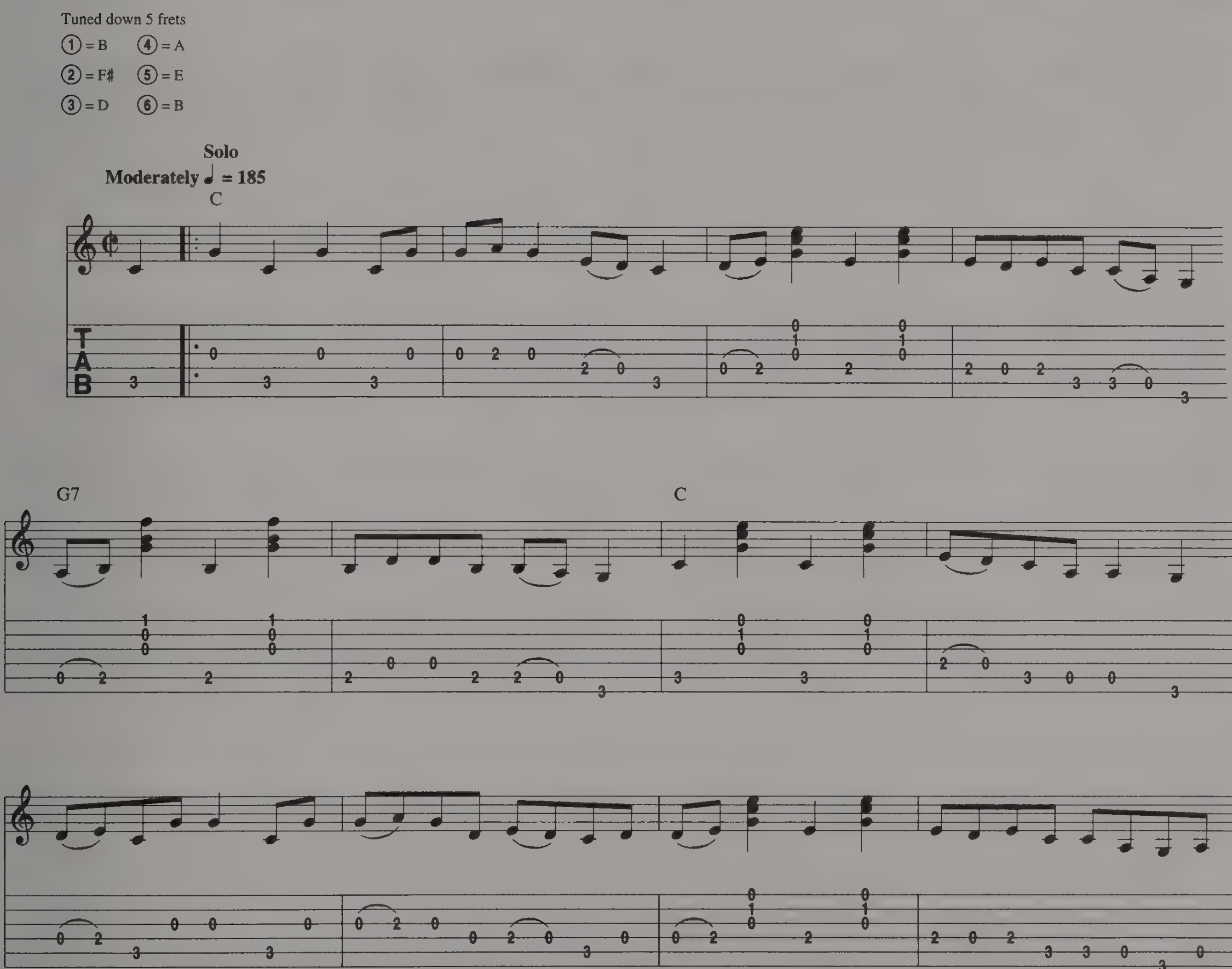
My Dixie Darling (Dixie Darling)

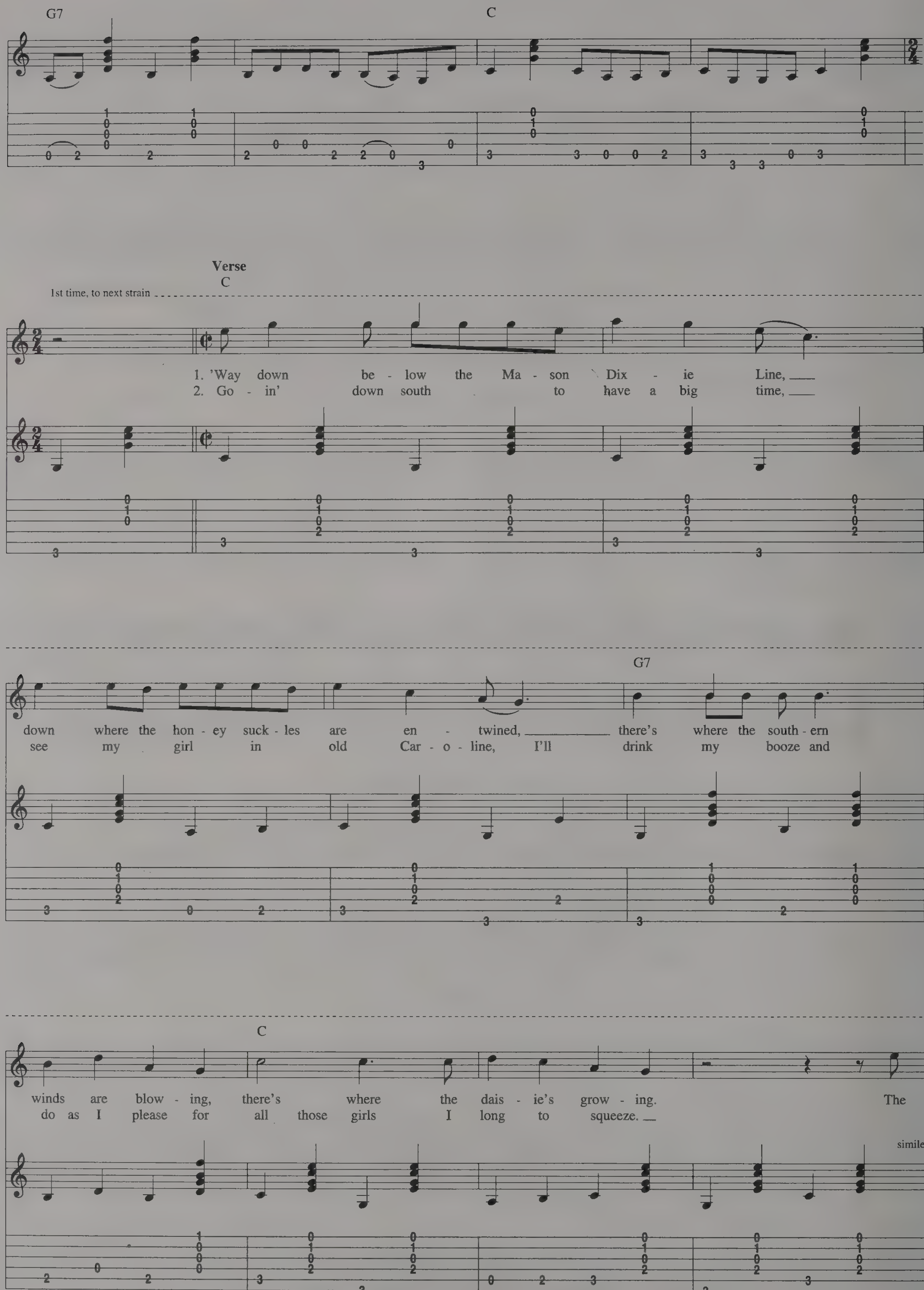
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

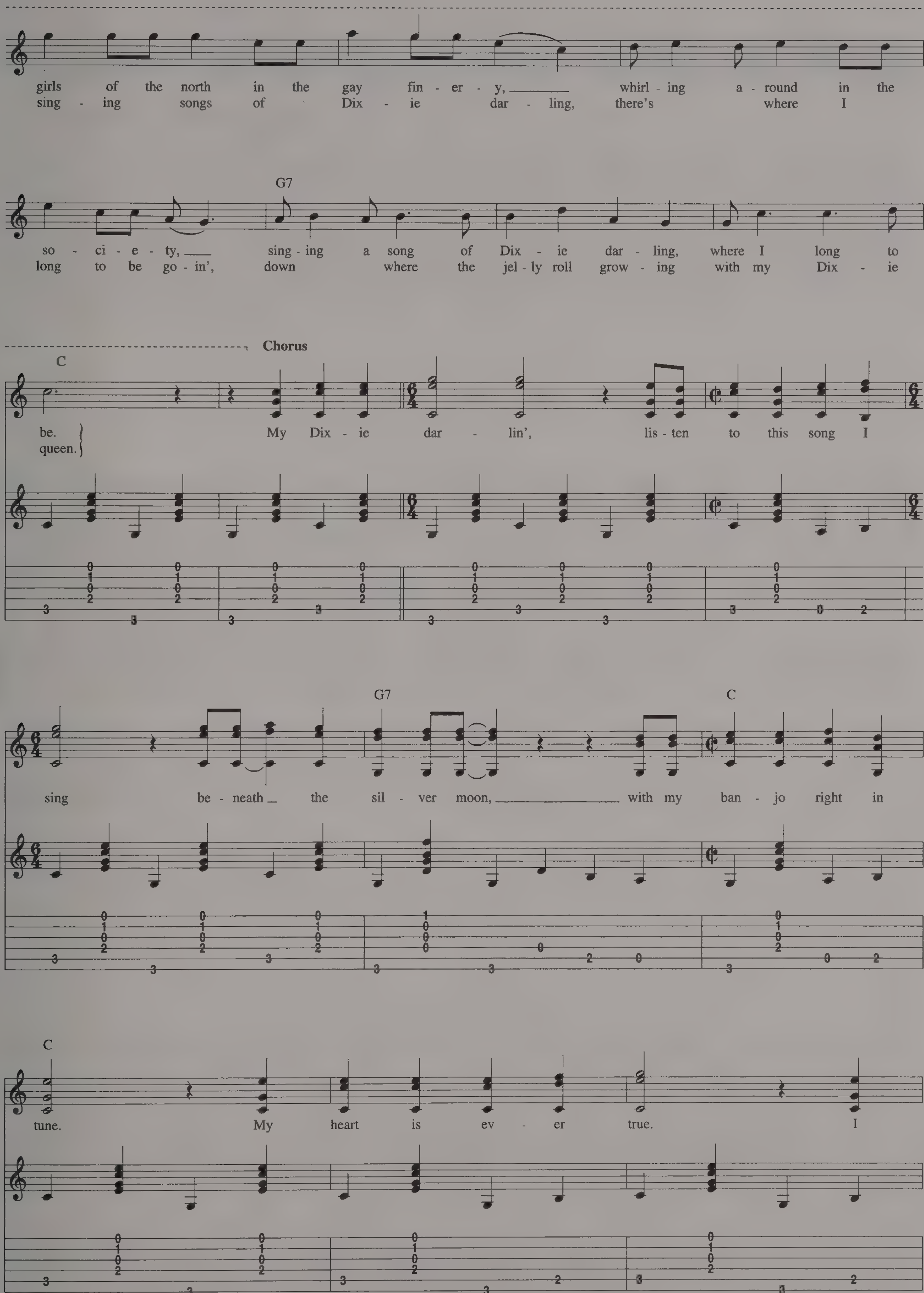
Between 1936 and 1938, the Carters recorded sixty songs for Decca Records. "My Dixie Darling" comes from their first Decca sessions, during which they recorded twenty sides on June 8 and 9, 1936, in New York City.

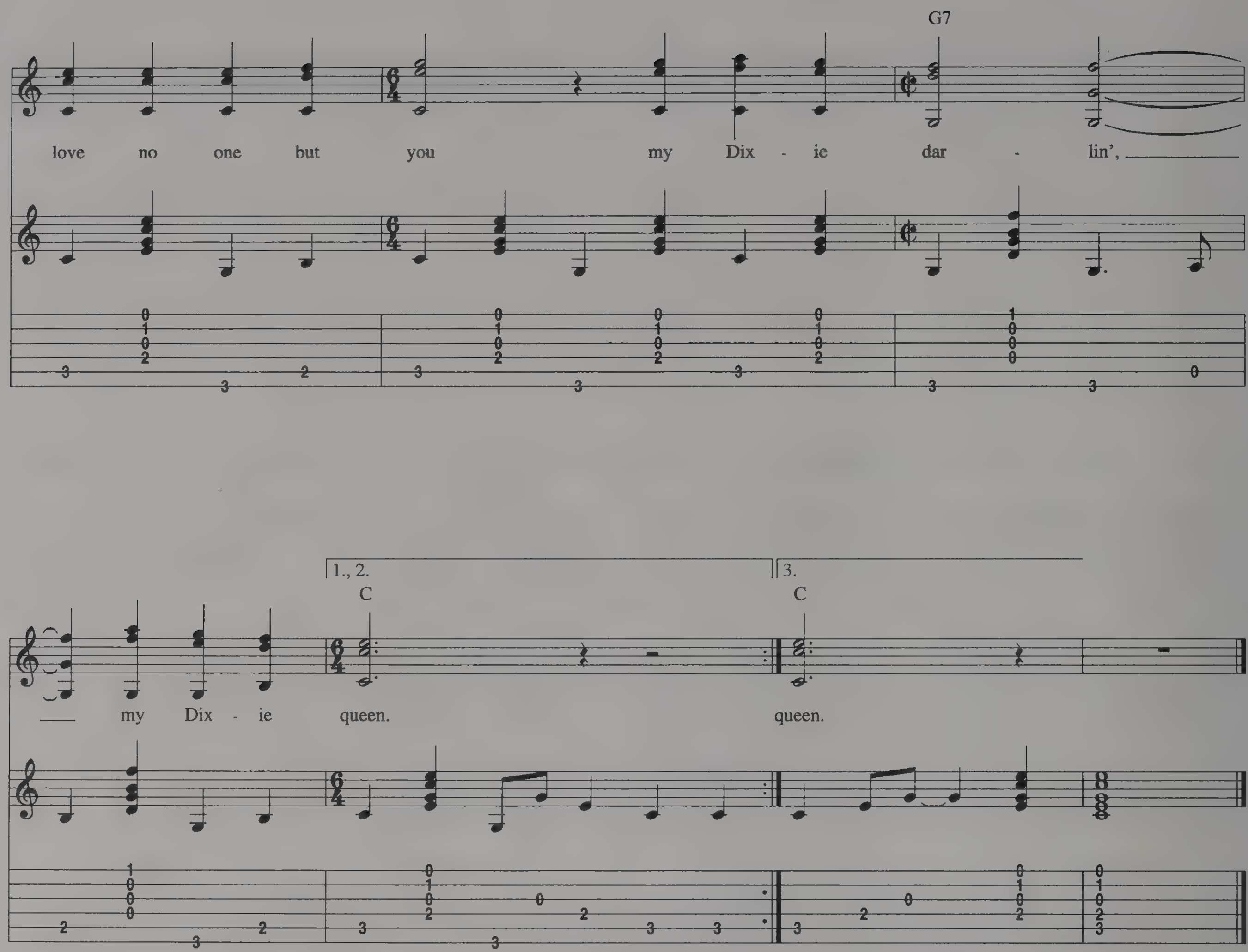
It's hard to tell from the recording, but Maybelle probably flatpicked "My Dixie Darling." Her introductory solo features more rapid single-note runs than usual, and most players use a pick to play in that style.

Bluegrasser fiddlers/band leaders Laurie Lewis and Byron Berline have recorded "My Dixie Darling," as did Carlene Carter, and Lonnie Donegan, the skiffle band leader who was a big influence on the Beatles and other British Invasion groups.




G7
C
Verse
C
1st time, to next strain
1. 'Way down be - low the Ma - son Dix - ie Line,
2. Go - in' down south to have a big time,
down where the hon - ey suck - les are en - twined, there's where the south - ern
see my girl in old Car - o - line, I'll drink my booze and
G7
winds are blow - ing, there's where the dais - ie's grow - ing. The
do as I please for all those girls I long to squeeze.
C
simile


girls of the north in the gay fin - er - y, whirl - ing a - round in the
sing - ing songs of Dix - ie dar - ling, there's where I
G7
so - ci - e - ty, sing - ing a song of Dix - ie dar - ling, where I long to
long to be go - in', down where the jel - ly roll grow - ing with my Dix - ie
Chorus
C
be.
queen.
My Dix - ie dar - lin', lis - ten to this song I
G7
C
sing be - neath the sil - ver moon, with my ban - jo right in
C
tune. My heart is ev - er true. I


G7
love no one but you my Dix - ie dar - lin',
1., 2.
3.
C
C
my Dix - ie queen.
queen.

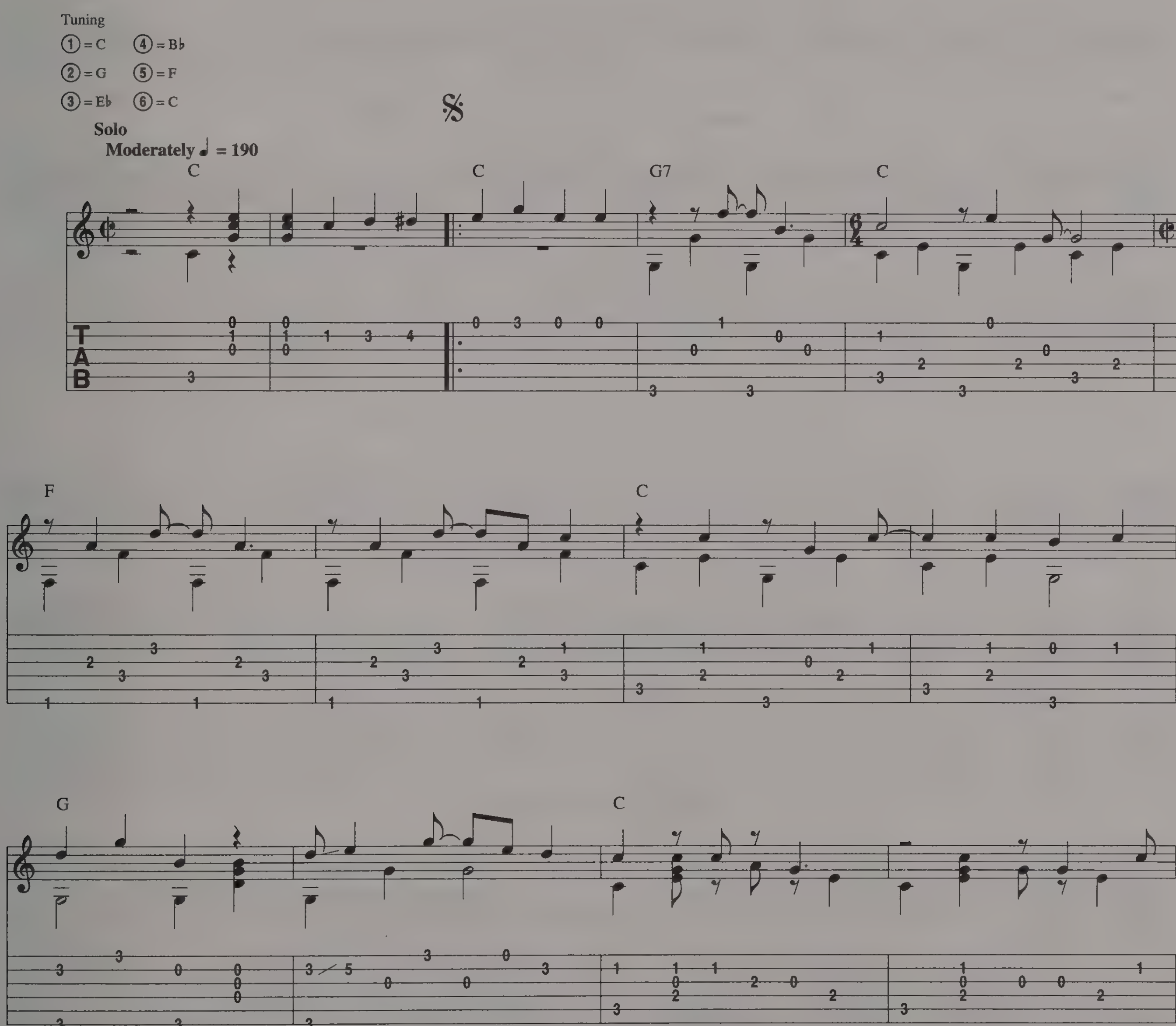
Third New York Sessions
June 8–9, 1936

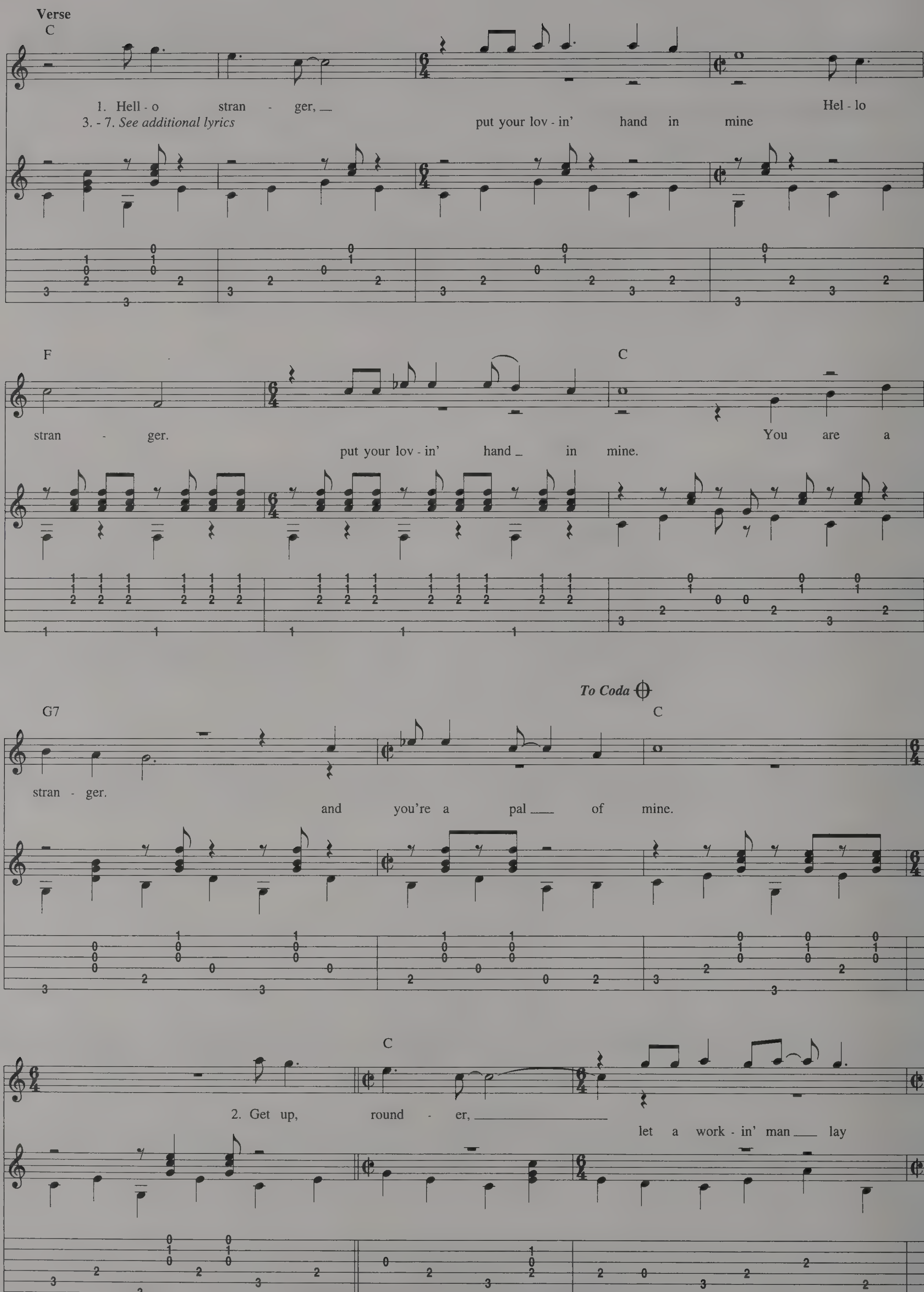
Hello Stranger

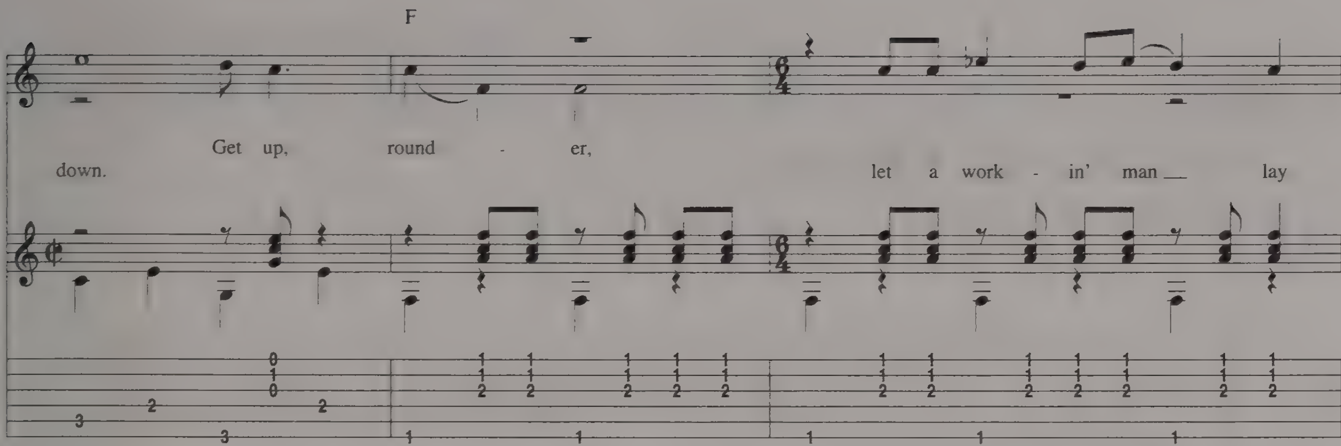
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

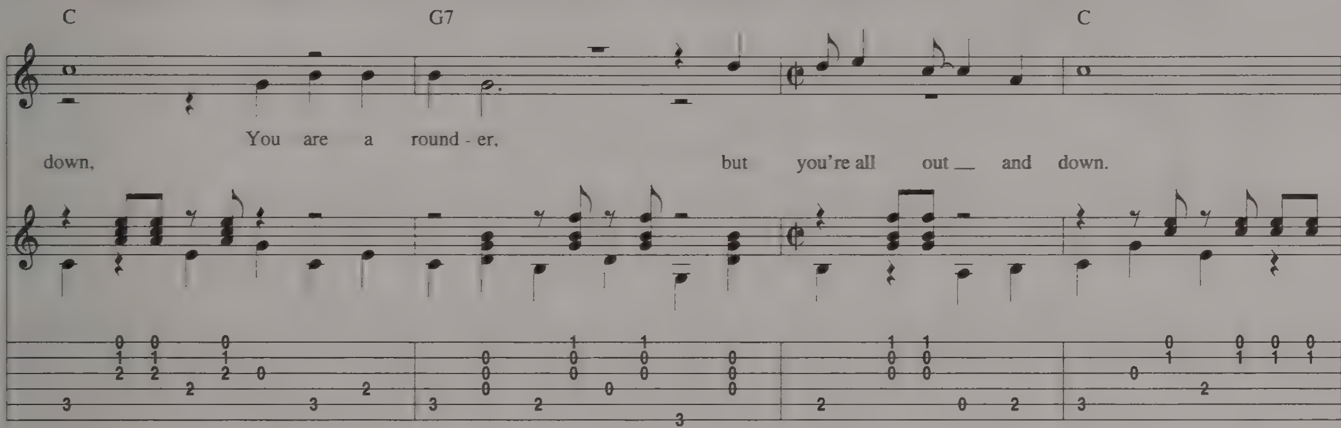
When the Carters recorded "Hello Stranger," June 7, 1937 in New York City, Sara and Maybelle did an interesting call-and-reponse vocal swap during each verse. Maybelle fingerpicked the tune, which is full of "extra beats."

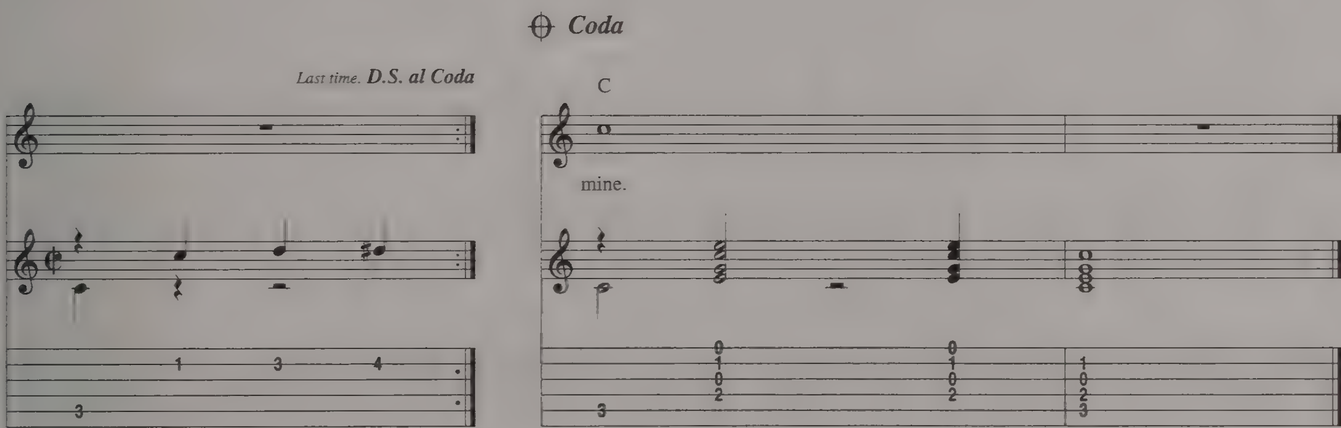
This altered twelve-bar blues has been recorded by Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Emmylou Harris, Norman Blake, Hazel & Alice, and Doc Watson.




Verse
C
1. Hell - o stran - ger, put your lov - in' hand in mine
3. - 7. See additional lyrics
Hel - lo
F
C
stran - ger.
put your lov - in' hand in mine.
You are a
G7
To Coda
stran - ger.
and you're a pal of mine.
C
2. Get up, round - er,
let a work - in' man lay







Additional Lyrics

3. Every time I ride the six and four streetcar,
every time I ride the six and four streetcar,
I can see my baby peepin' through the bar.

4. She bowed her head, she waved both hands at me,
she bowed her head, she waved both hands at me.
I'm prison bound, I'm longing to be free.

5. Oh, I'll see you when your troubles are like mine,
oh, I'll see you when your troubles are like mine.
Oh, I'll see you when you haven't got a dime.

6. Weeping like a willow, mournin' like a dove,
weeping like a willow, mournin' like a dove.
There's a girl up the country that I really love.

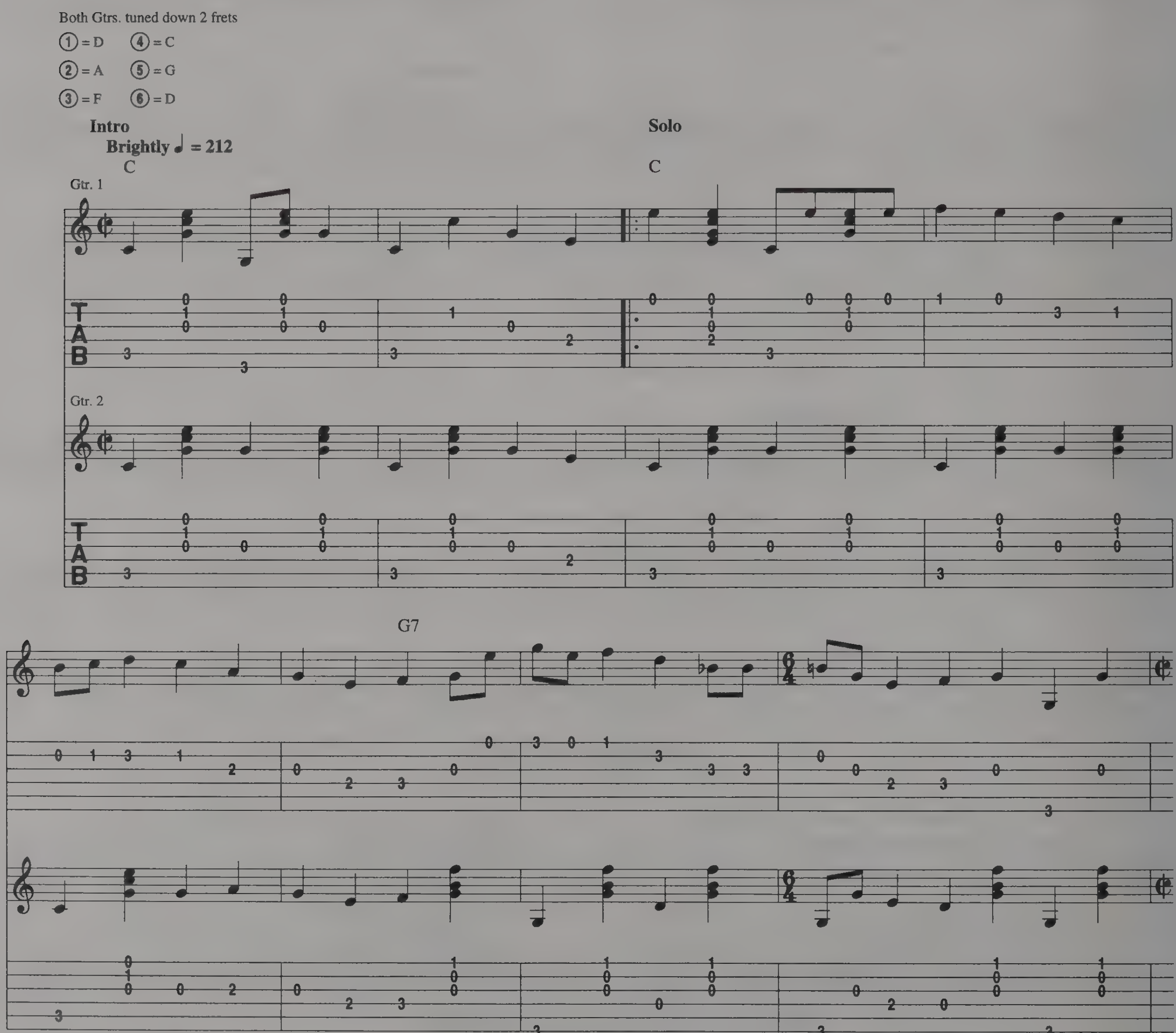
7. Hello stranger, put your lovin' hand in mine.
Hello stranger, put your lovin' hand in mine.
You are a stranger and you're a pal of mine.

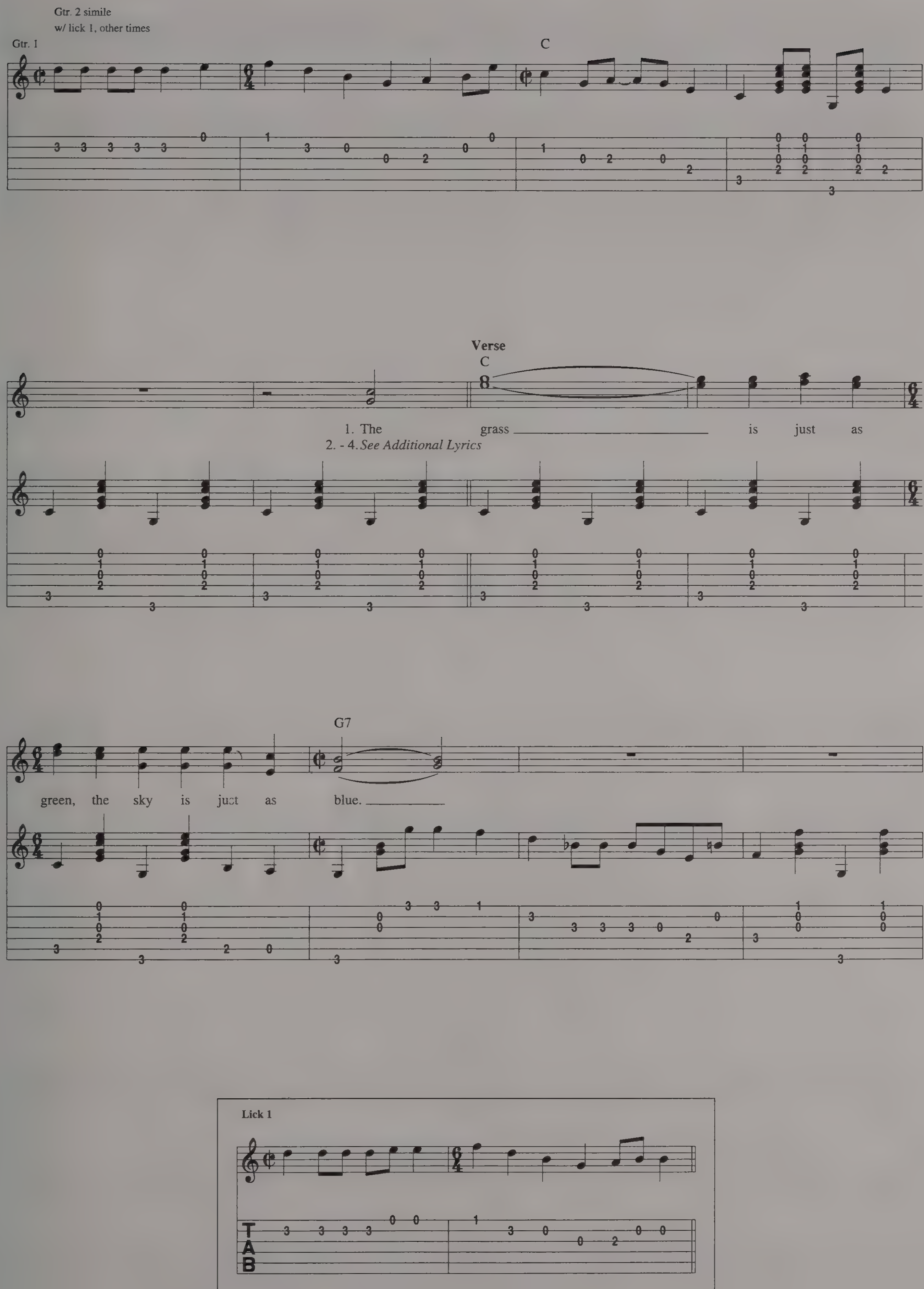
You Are My Flower

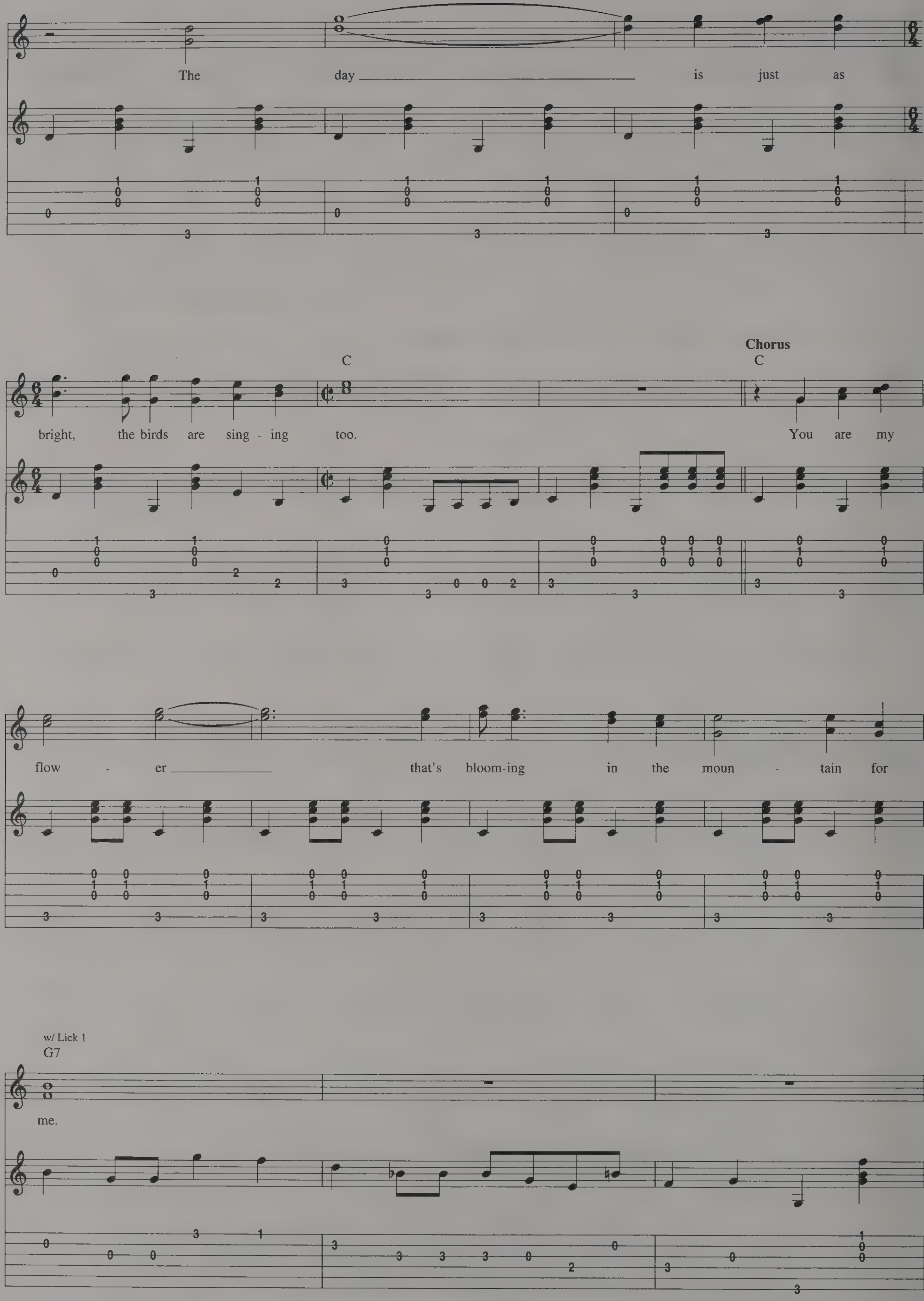
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

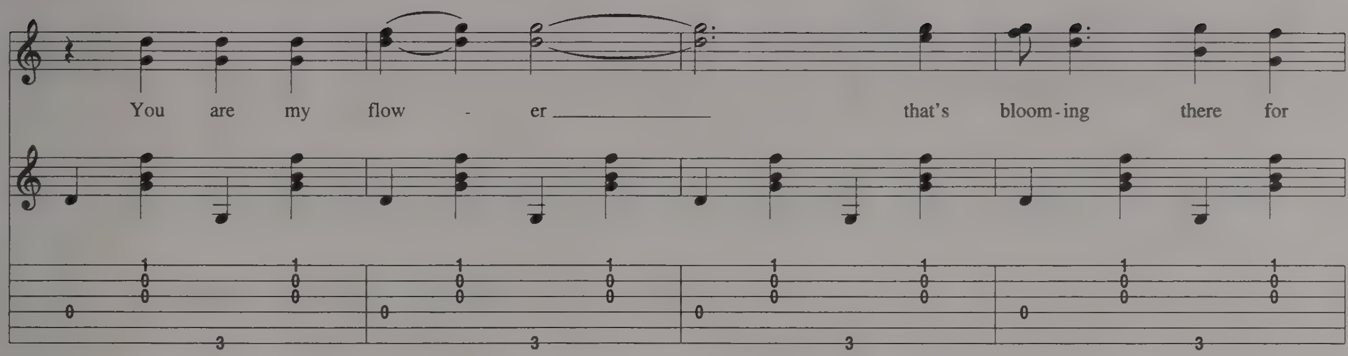
Maybelle and Sara found the poem that became "You Are My Flower" in a pamphlet. They re-wrote the words and Maybelle wrote the music. The Carter Family recorded the song June 8, 1938 in Charlotte, North Carolina, during their "border radio" period. They had moved to Del Rio, Texas for a few years to play two radio shows a day on several Mexican border stations.

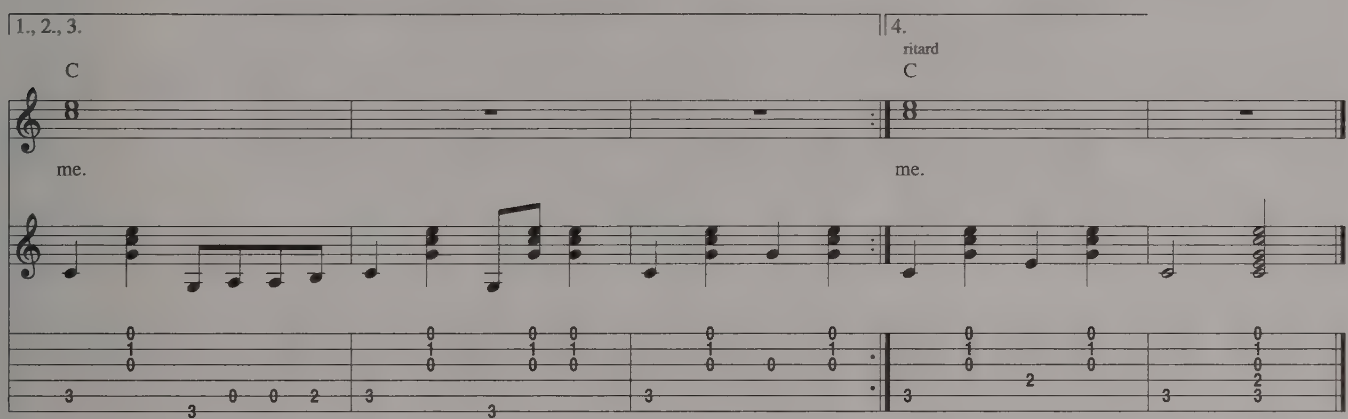
Maybelle's flatpicking-style solo and bluesy backup licks laid the groundwork for fancy flatpickers to come like Doc Watson and Joe Maphis




Gtr. 2 simile
w/ lick 1, other times
Gtr. 1
C
Verse
C
1. The grass is just as
2. - 4. See Additional Lyrics
G7
green, the sky is just as blue.
Lick 1
T
A
B


The day is just as
bright, the birds are sing - ing too.
C
Chorus
C
You are my
flow - er that's bloom-ing in the moun - tain for
w/ Lick 1
G7
me.





Additional Lyrics

2. The hour is just as pure, the sunlight just as free,
   and nature seems to say it's all for you and me. **(Chorus)**

3. So wear a happy smile and life will be worthwhile.
   Forget your tears and don't forget to smile. **(Chorus)**

4. When summertime has passed and snow begins to fall,
   just sing this song and say to one and all: **(Chorus)**

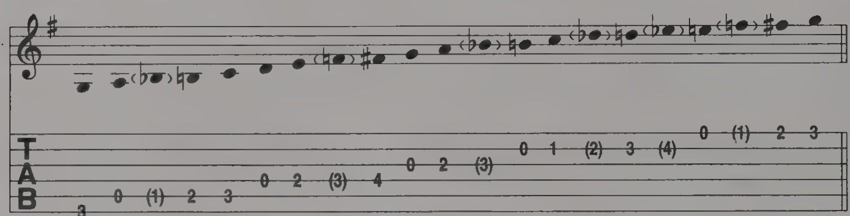
Coal Miner's Blues

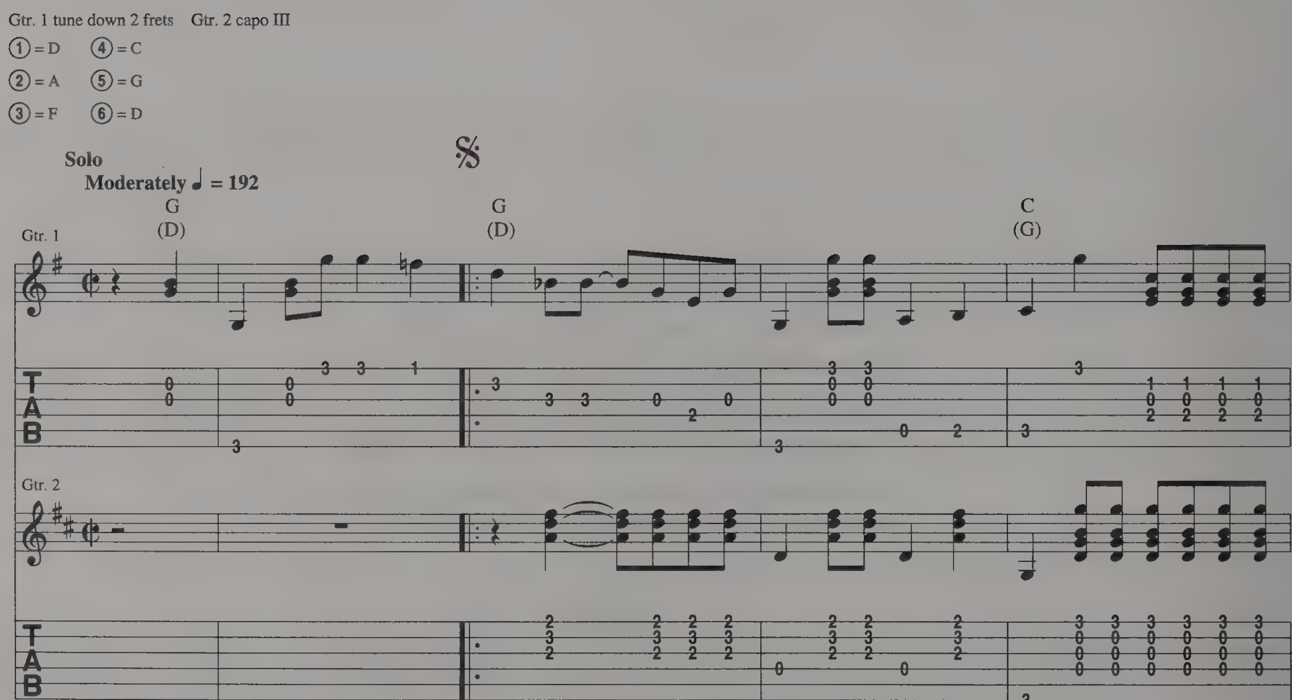
Words and Music by A.P. Carter

Recorded the same day as "You Are My Flower," "Coal Miner's Blues" offers a rare sample of Maybelle Carter's flatpicking style. She played "Coal Miner's Blues" in G position, basing her licks on the G scale written below. It's a major scale with "blue notes" (♭3rd = B♭ and ♭7th = F) added. Her guitar was tuned down two frets, so the actual key is F.

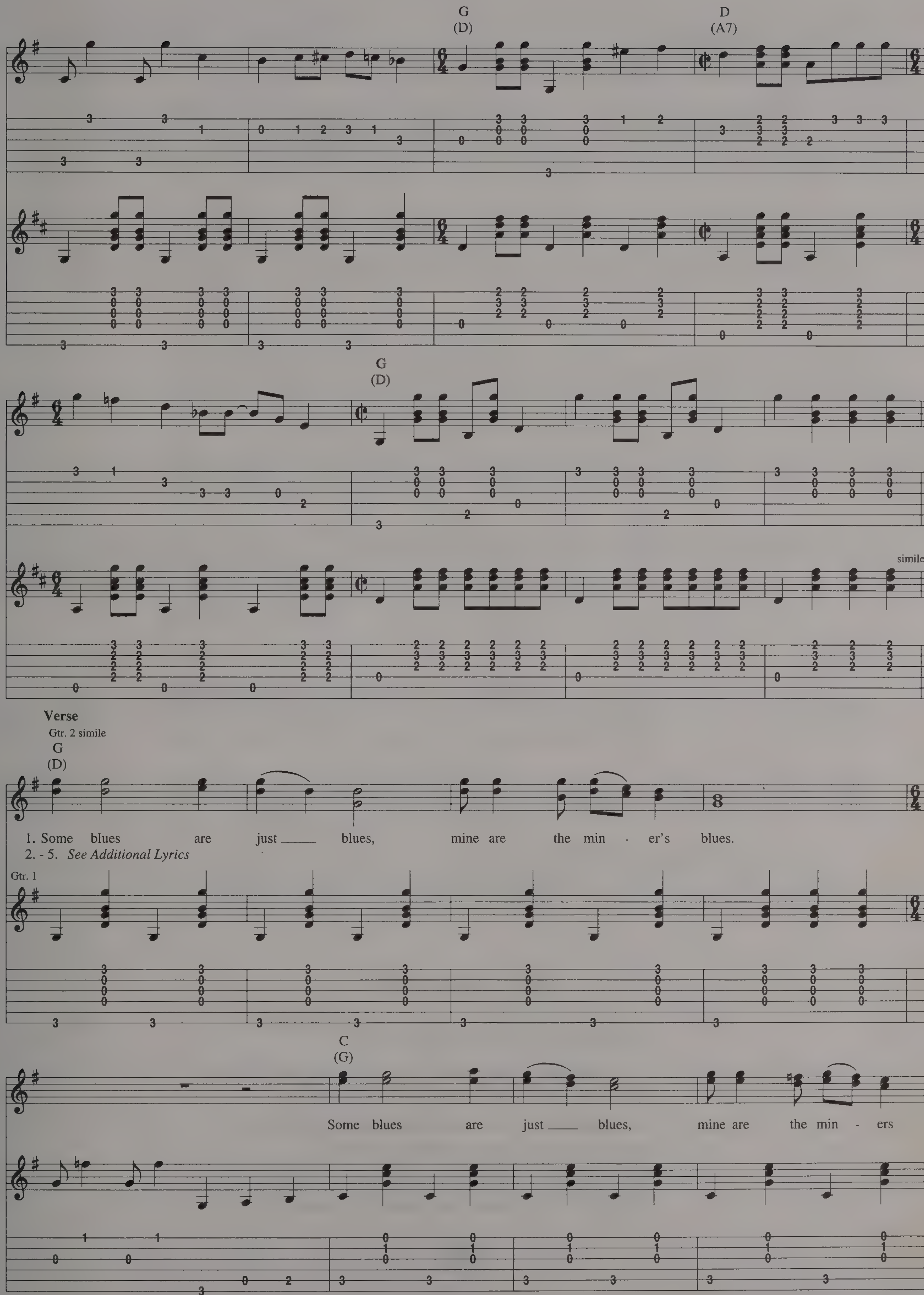
Sara and Maybelle said they wrote the melody to "Coal Miner's Blues" to words given them by an old man in Lee County, Virginia, but A.P. said he learned the song from miners in Wise County. Either way, it's a topical song about working conditions in the Virginia mines.

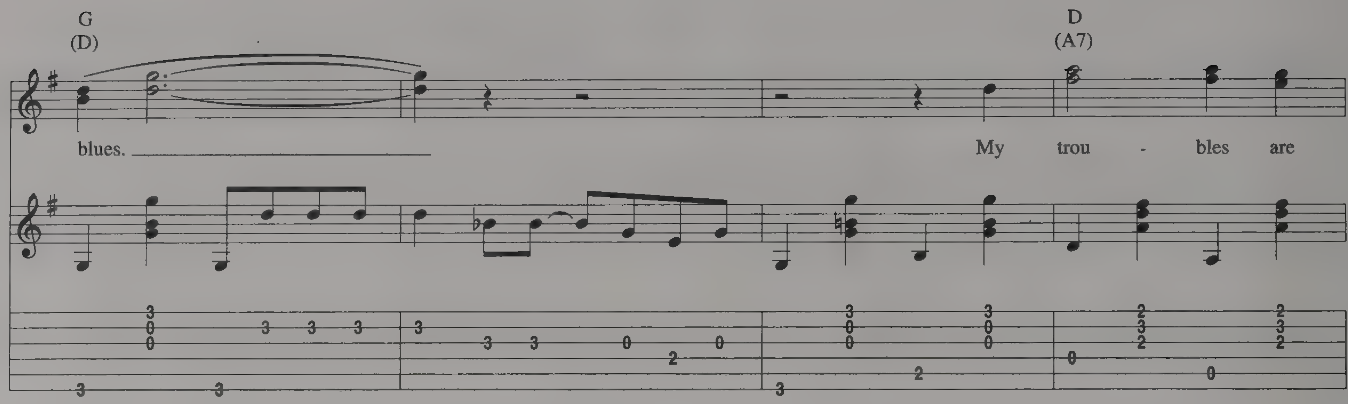
G Major Scale with Blue Notes

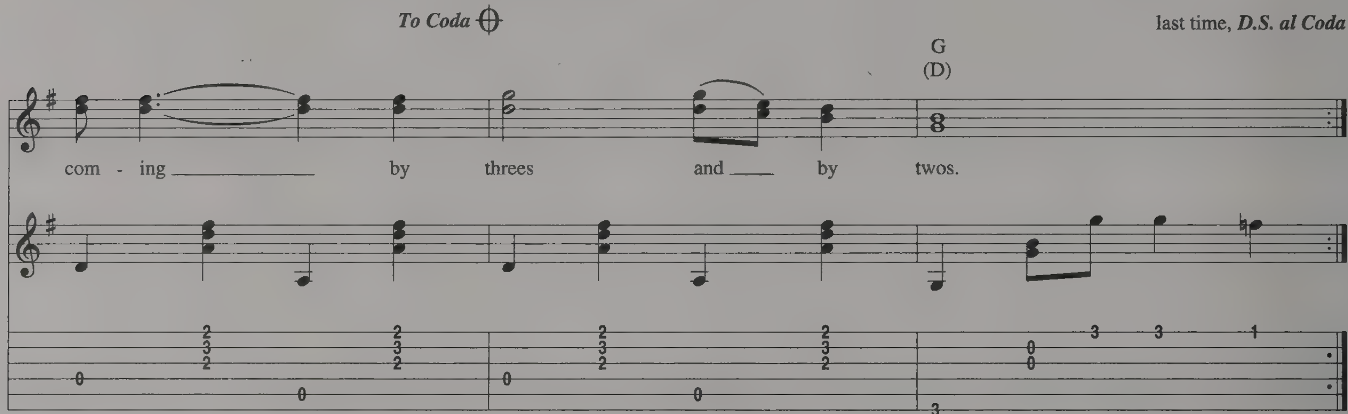


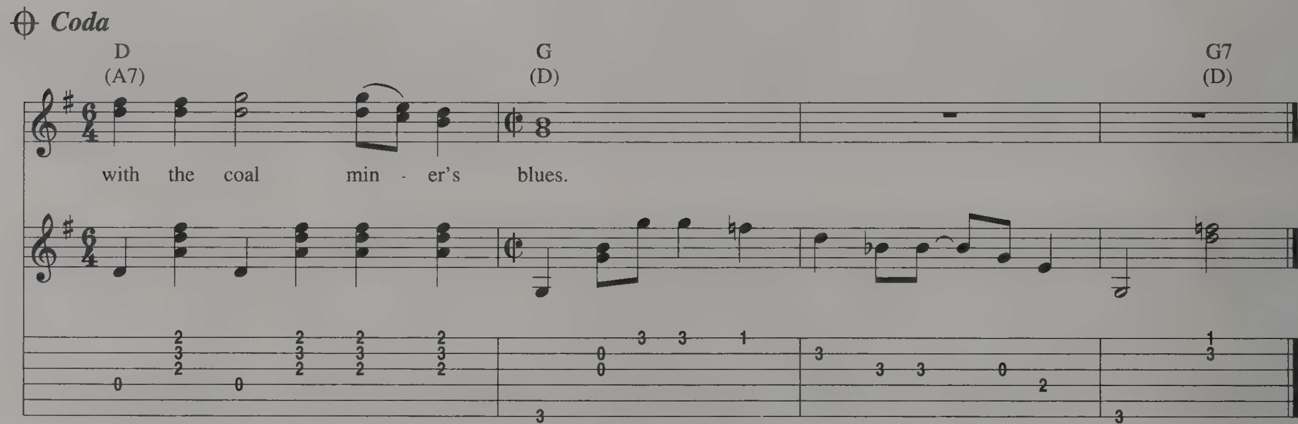


*Symbols in parenthesis represent chord names respective to capoed guitar. Symbols above represent chord names respective to Gtr. 1, which is tuned down 2 frets.


G
(D)
D
(A7)
G
(D)
simile
Verse
Gtr. 2 simile
G
(D)
1. Some blues are just blues, mine are the min - er's blues.
2. - 5. See Additional Lyrics
Gtr. 1
C
(G)
Some blues are just blues, mine are the min - ers







Additional Lyrics

2. Blues and more blues, it's a coal black blues. (2 times)
   Got coal in my hair, got coal in my shoes.

3. These blues are so blue they are the coal black blues. (2 times)
   For my place will cave in and my life I will lose.

4. You say they are blues, these old miner's blues. (2 times)
   Now I must have sharpened these picks that I use.

5. I'm out with these blues, dirty coal black blues. (2 times)
   We'll lay off tomorrow with the coal miner's blues.

Discography

Listening Suggestions

Most of the songs transcribed in this book can be heard on the Rounder Records CD series 1064-1072. These CDs are particularly relevant:

- *The Carter Family, Anchored In Love (1927–1928)* (Rounder 1064)
  includes "Keep on the Sunny Side," "The Storms Are on the Ocean," "Wildwood Flower," "Little Darling Pal of Mine," "Bury Me Under the Weeping Willow" and "John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man"
- *The Carter Family, My Clinch Mountain Home (1928–1929)* (Rounder 1065)
  includes "The Foggy Mountain Top," "Forsaken Love," "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," "Lulu Walls," "I Have No One to Love Me (But the Sailor on the Deep Blue Sea)," "Little Moses," "Engine 143" and "The Homestead on the Farm"
- *The Carter Family, When the Roses Bloom in Dixieland (1929–1930)* (Rounder 1066)
  includes "Wabash Cannonball," "Jimmy Brown the Newsboy," "The Cannonball" and "When the Springtime Comes Again"
- *The Carter Family, Worried Man Blues (1930)* (Rounder 1067)
  includes "Worried Man Blues," "Lonesome Valley" and "On the Rock Where Moses Stood"

Other noteworthy Carter albums include:

- *Flatt & Scruggs, Songs of the Famous Carter Family* (Sony)
  Maybelle Carter sings and plays with the bluegrass group
- *On Border Radio, Vol. 1* (Arhoolie 412) The Carter Family live on radio
- *Sara & Maybelle Carter* (Bear Family 15471)
  Their late 1960s Newport Festival "revival"
- *Maybelle Carter, Wildwood Pickin'* (Vanguard 77021)
  Maybelle plays and talks about her music at a mid-1960s Newport Folk Festival
- *Best of the Best of the Original Carter Family* (King 1478)

Bibliography

Reading Suggestions

There are many books by Fred Sokolow, published by Hal Leonard Publications, that will help you further explore the music of the Carter Family, including:

Roots of Country Guitar (a method book with transcriptions) HL 699079

Roots of Acoustic Blues Guitar (a method book with transcriptions) HL 699068

Roots of Slide Guitar (a method book with transcriptions) HL 699083

Jimmie Rodgers (Recorded Versions) HL 690260

Classic Blues for Voice and Fingerstyle Guitar (fingerpicking arrangements) HL 698992

The Slide Guitar Book (a method book with transcriptions) HL 650008

Roots of Country (Recorded Versions) HL 694897

Hall of Fame Guitar Legends (Recorded Versions) HL 690084

THE Carter Family collection

Amber Tresses

Bury Me Under the Weeping Willow

Cannonball (Cannonball Blues)

Can the Circle Be Unbroken

Coal Miner's Blues

East Virginia Blues

Engine One-Forty-Three

Foggy Mountain Top

Forsaken Love

Gathering Flowers From the Hillside

Hello Stranger

Homestead on the Farm

I Have No One to Love Me (But the Sailor on the Deep Blue Sea)

I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes

Jimmie Brown the Newsboy

John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man

Keep on the Sunny Side

Little Darling Pal of Mine

Little Joe (Darling Little Joe)

Little Moses

Lonesome for You

Lonesome Valley

Lulu Walls

My Dixie Darling

On the Rock Where Moses Stood

Storms Are on the Ocean

Wabash Cannonball

When the Springtime Comes Again

Wildwood Flower

Winding Stream

Worried Man Blues

You Are My Flower

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